



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 51.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S TRAIL OF THE MAN TIGERS

OR
THE DOOM OF THE BRANDED HAND



IN A FLASH THE NOOSE WAS OVER THE UPRAISED HAND, AND THE MAN-TIGER WAS DRAGGED DOWNWARD TO THE FLOOR WITH TERRIBLE FORCE.



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Buffalo Bill's Trail of the Man Tigers;

OR,

THE DOOM OF THE BRANDED HAND.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE 'MAN-TIGER IN THE TOILS.'

"That man is a terror, or wishes strangers to think he is."

"I guess you must be a stranger at Trails Cross not to know the Man-Tiger."

"I am something of a stranger here; but who is the man you call the Man-Tiger?"

"If you asked Tiger that you'd soon find out, for he'd feel insulted, as everybody in these parts knows, Tom, the Tiger."

"As I do not know him, please tell me?"

"I'll do it, and don't you run on sure death by buckin' agin' him in any game."

"Is he so dangerous, then?"

"It is jist that and more."

"He is a man-tiger, indeed, when he's aroused; he's a terror from wayback, the worst man in these

parts, when on the warpath, but peaceable as a lamb when not drinkin' firewater, as he is now."

"What does the Tiger do when he is not killing people?"

"He runs a ranch over toward the Rio Grande."

"What's his full name, if he is not afraid to own it?"

"Sh--! don't let him hear you, or there'll be a funeral of a stranger about your size. We all call him Tom and Tiger, and the last name fits like a cowboy's boot."

"I think I know his face, and—"

"Just listen to him talk now," and there was a general silence in the Trails Cross saloon, as the Man-Tiger was shouting, a man in cowboy dress, large in form, over six feet by a couple of inches, a giant in looks, and with an evil face, which a heavy beard and long hair did not hide. He was heavily

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armed and had the look of a desperado of the worst type.

The Man-Tiger was speaking, and what he said was interesting, at least.

"Pards," he shouted out, as he stood before the long bar of Trails Cross' popular saloon.

"Any man that wants ter pick up a clean five thousand dollars can do it, if he's got the nerve ter try for it by tackling me, Tom, the Man-Tiger, Terror of Texas, for that is the sum set on my head."

"I'm outlawed, and one the hangman is lookin' fer, so who wants it?"

"That's the way he allus shouts when he is drinkin', stranger pard."

"Does no one attempt to get the price on his head?"

"They hain't such fools about here now, pard."

"I think I'll make a try for it, for I am sure I know the fellow."

"Pard, do you want to commit suicide?" and the man who had volunteered the information about the Man-Tiger looked pityingly upon the stranger, who said:

"It is but man to man."

"No, it isn't, for Tiger's more than a giant in strength, quick as a broncho, a dead shot and the worst hand with the knife in these parts."

"Don't throw your life away, pard, for I likes you, even if I don't know you. Everybody, even Monte Jose, is afraid of Tiger, for he has a big death list."

"Who is Monte Jose?"

"A gambler, square as they make them, afraid of nothing, and a dandy from wayback."

"Why should one man fear another?"

"Don't know, stranger, but they do."

"The Tiger is telling again that there is a price on his head, and I'll know more about it," and the handsome stranger arose to his feet and seemed to be measuring the distance between the desperado and himself.

"Anybody wants ther price of my head kin git it—if he's got ther narve!" shouted the desperado, and his eyes fell upon the stranger, but only an instant, and then roved about the large saloon as though looking for some one who wanted to earn the money. The desperado held a revolver in hand, ready to kill any man who made a motion to draw a weapon.

The man who had been talking to the stranger saw him suddenly turn his back to Tiger, take from a

hook on his belt a lariat, and, quick as a flash, with a turn of it about his head, fairly shoot the coil from his hand.

In a flash the noose was over the upraised hand of the outlaw, drawn taut and the Man-Tiger was dragged forward and downward to the floor with terrible force.

With a bound like that of a panther upon its prey, the stranger was upon the fallen desperado, a quick twist of his lariat had secured the ruffian, and a slash of his knife cut the belt of arms, leaving Tiger wholly at his mercy.

And all this was done in such a short space of time that even the victim of the stranger's wonderful skill in lasso-throwing could hardly realize what had happened.

A moment of silence fell upon all; then, as the crowd realized what had happened, one shouted:

"The Tiger's claws are clipped at last!"

There followed a burst of wild applause, and a crowd closed in around the stranger.

The latter was in no way excited by his achievement, but with his foot holding the desperado down, and his lasso securing his arms, he stood gazing at him, with a smile upon his fine face, that wore an expression of amusement rather than triumph.

At last order was called for among the excited crowd, and a voice asked:

"Say, stranger pard, what might your name be?"

"My name is Buffalo Bill," was the stranger's modest reply.

"Buffalo Bill! The border king!"

"We has heerd o' yer, pard!" cried one of the crowd, and a cheer followed the words:

"The border king who clipped the Tiger's claws!"

Then came a growl from the giant desperado, as he lay upon the floor.

"Did yer say yer name were Buffalo Bill?" he gasped.

"Yes."

"Ther border king?"

"That is a name my comrades give me."

"I knows yer."

"And I know you."

The man's face whitened still more, as he heard the response.

But he gave a light laugh, and said:

"Waal, I allows I is floored, and you is ther king bee o' ther hive, Buffalo Bill."

"Jist undo yer lariat and let me up, and I'll stand drinks for ther crowd, for I ought ter, bein' as I has been roped in so clever."

"I shall not loosen my lasso until I have these on you, for, as I said, I know you," and, quickly drawing a pair of steel manacles from his pocket, Buffalo Bill slipped them, with a sudden snap, upon the wrists of the desperado, securing his hands thus behind his back.

Then he unloosened his lasso, coiled it and hung it upon the hook in his belt.

"Say, pard, this hain't a squar deal, for I has owned up I was beat, and we stands for fair play here," Tiger urged.

"You have had more fair play than you deserve, and, as you have said, there is a reward on your head, dead or alive, I want it!"

"I were jokin', fer yer don't think I'd be fool enough ter say sich a thing ef it were true."

"It will be a sad joke for you, Tiger."

"See here, pard, you hain't ther men ter see a stranger chip in and use me like this, when I say I has got enough, and is willing to stand drinks and cigars all round?"

This appeal struck forcibly a few, for a drink and a cigar free was all that some of the gang were there for; so one looker-on, known as Deadly Dick, said:

"See here, stranger, when a man's down we hain't ther ones ter see him kicked, so let up on him ef yer knows when yer is in good health. Hain't I talkin', pard?"

Fully a score of men asserted that Deadly Dick was talking, and they gathered the closer about the border king and his prisoner.

They saw a chance to make a little something out of Tiger for rescuing him, and it was worth seeing how far, at least, they could play a bluff game upon the stranger.

He was too dangerous, from his appearance, for one man to bully, but a crowd made it different.

Deadly Dick felt that he had made a hit, and he turned to those who had chimed in with him, when, quick as a flash, Buffalo Bill's lariat fell over him, and he was jerked off his feet and fell upon the form of Tiger, still lying at the feet of the Border King.

Then, for the first time, Buffalo Bill dropped his hands upon his revolvers.

He did not draw them, but, facing the crowd, cried, sternly:

"See here, men; I claim Tiger as my game, and the reward upon his head as mine, and I do not intend to be bullied by any set of cutthroats!"

There was something so utterly fearless in the border king, as he stood facing the score of men who had followed the lead of Deadly Dick, that he won a cheer from the well-disposed of the crowd, while Monte Jose called out:

"You have won the game, pard, and I'll see that you rake in the gold, and there are men here to back up what I say——"

The yell that went up at this was answer enough in the affirmative, and the followers of Deadly Dick, who still lay upon the floor under the foot of Buffalo Bill and upon Tiger, slouched back out of the way, no longer anxious to have attention drawn to them.

CHAPTER II.

HE'S WANTED.

"You I don't want," said Buffalo Bill, as he removed his foot from Deadly Dick, and, loosening his lasso from about him, set him on his feet and sent him flying into the midst of the crowd, who shouted with laughter at the sorry figure cut by the would-be champion of Tiger.

Then, turning to the latter, he bent over, and, heavy weight though he was, raised him to his feet, while he said:

"But you I do want, and you go with me."

"Whar?"

"To the fort."

"What fer?"

"I said that I knew you!"

"Yes, but you don't!"

"You are a gambler, I believe?"

"I gambles some."

"I'll bet you a hundred to fifty I can call the turn on you."

"Done! jist let my hand free, so I kin git my money out o' my pocket."

"No, I'll trust you for the money."

"Waal, who be I?"

"You said there was a reward of five thousand on your head?"

"I was joking."

"You were not."

"Waal, I knows."

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"There is a price on your head, and I shall get it—
you are too dangerous a man to let at large."

"You is talkin' nonsense, Buffalo Bill."

"Am I, Tom Tresco, deserter from the United States Army?" was the quiet response.

All saw the livid hue that swept over the face of the Tiger, and heard a sound like a moan come from between his shut teeth.

"You lie! I am not Tom Tresco. I was never in the army."

"Indeed! Then what does that India ink mark on your wrist mean—'T. T., U. S. A.?"

"I saw it when you held your revolver over your head, and knew you were the man I wanted."

"I say it is a lie! A pard o' mine put his name on my wrist as I put my name on his. His name was Tom Tresco, and he was in the army; but he is dead now."

"I'll take my chances in taking you in as Tom Tresco, deserter, robber and murderer! and we leave to-morrow for the fort."

"Back! all of you! I know this man, and I shall kill him, if you press me, and then fight it out with you!" cried Buffalo Bill, so that every man realized he was in deadly earnest.

The crowd, who had been backing Deadly Dick, had again shown a disposition to interfere, and they were pressing toward the prisoner as though to attempt a rescue, when the words brought them to a sudden halt.

"Say, gents, are it lawful fer a stranger ter come inter Trails Cross and cut such a high figger?" called out one of the crowd, who appeared to have more grit in him than Deadly Dick had shown.

"I came here as a stranger, and I saw this man fling a defiance at you all, with no one to take it up, so I chipped in, and, having bagged my game, I don't intend you shall take it from me," and Buffalo Bill stepped squarely forward in front of the crowd.

"You talks big fer a feller as plays a lone hand, young man," said the man who had taken upon himself the leadership of the party.

"If you object, interfere, that is all," was the cool reply.

The man glanced back at his followers to see if they were ready to back him in what he did, and he seemed reassured by what he saw, for he said, quickly:

"Come, let Tiger go, or you answers ter me."

In an instant, he was covered by Buffalo Bill's revolver, quicker than he thought a man could draw a weapon, and sharply came the words:

"And you answer to me! Do you wilt, or shall I touch trigger?"

"Quick! for life is too short to fool!"

"I knows jist when I has got enough, pard."

But the man made a signal as he spoke, for the crowd pressed closer, and revolvers were drawn, and, by the quickest of movements, Buffalo Bill whirled Tiger in front of him, and, with a revolver now in each hand, held on either side of the prisoner, said, in a derisive tone:

"Now, gentlemen, to find my heart you must shoot through your pard's body."

"Say when, for I am ready!" and Buffalo Bill smiled serenely.

"Say, pards, don't shoot! for the love o' God, don't shoot!" shouted Tiger, who had been thus suddenly made a breastwork of to his own terror.

What the result would have been it is hard to say had not Monte Jose, the gambler, just then come to the rescue with:

"Gentlemen, fair play, say I, and the border king shall have it, for he won his game squarely and shall have the stakes."

"Who of you are with me in my play?"

Monte Jose was well known all along the border as a man of iron nerve, liberal to a fault, and one who hit what he aimed at.

He stepped to the side of Buffalo Bill as he uttered the words, and faced the angry element that pressed him to set Tiger free.

His eyes met those of Dan, the man who had assumed the leadership of the rescuers, and the latter said, as he saw that the crowd was with the gambler:

"You hain't no right ter chip in dere, Monte Jose."

"It is a right I take upon myself, for no plucky stranger like that one shall be set upon by a pack of dastardly coyotes who would not dare to meet him single-handed," was the quick retort.

"Waal, as yer has chipped in, and insulted me as well, we'll jist settle it as to whether the stranger walks off with Tiger or not."

"Is that a challenge for me to fight you?"

"Ef yer c'u'd understand English, you'd know it were."

"I am willing, and ready, Dan, so name your pard, and I'll name mine for the duel."

"Deadly Dick's my man, Monte Jose."

"And I shall ask the border king to serve me."

"Pardon me, but this quarrel cannot be taken out of my hands, sir, though I thank you for your kindness in coming to my aid."

"My prisoner there is a fugitive from justice, and, if that man considers him worth fighting for, he must meet me—no one else," and Buffalo Bill smiled.

"Does yer mean you is ter meet me, stranger?" asked Dan, with a show of relief, for he knew what Monte Jose was with a revolver, and he did not know how well the border king could shoot.

"I have no desire to meet you, or any one else."

"This man is my prisoner, and I intend to take him with me, and, as that gentleman was so kind as to come to my aid, I do not intend he shall risk his life to help me while I look idly on, so, if you wish to settle whether I lose or hold my man by a duel, all right."

A chorus of voices shouted at this arrangement, and Monte Jose said:

"You have the call, pard, so I throw up my hand; but I'll see that you have a square deal and no marked cards run in on you."

"How shall it be?"

"Let that man decide to suit himself, and I am satisfied," was Buffalo Bill's cool response.

"Well, I've some experience in these little affairs. You being the challenged party, I shall decide how the game is to be played."

"Is that square, pards?" and Monte Jose appealed to the crowd.

A chorus of yells assured him, and Dan and his followers needed no more than this to see that they were greatly in the minority.

Up to this moment, Tiger had been a seemingly interested looker-on, but now he spoke up, and to the point:

"Gents, all!"

An instant silence followed this appeal, for every man present congratulated himself upon having been called a "gent," whatever that might mean.

"It strikes me that this leetle matter c'u'd be settled atween ther young feller that calls himself ther border king, and yours truly, I bein' most interested," b'now delig'nt in'.

"That's so!" shouted a number of voices, and, thus encouraged, Tiger continued:

"Now, I'm obliged ter Dead'y Dick and Dan, and

ther others fer chippin' in ter help me out; but I wants no man ter fight my fights as long as I am able ter do it, so I says that ef ther border king kin settle whether I goes with him, or stays, by fightin' with Dan, let ther scrimmage be atween me and him, with knives or revolvers, as he may please."

A roar of applause greeted this suggestion of Tiger, and put him at once again in favor with the crowd.

But Buffalo Bill said:

"No, I shall not cheat the hangman by killing you, for you go with me, unless Dan there calls in my checks."

Tiger looked disappointed, and Dan did not beam with smiles at the border king's decision, while some one suggested to leave it to a vote of the crowd.

"I leave it to no one. If that man backs down from his challenge, I let him go. I seek no trouble," was the determined response of Buffalo Bill.

"Gentlemen, the duel must decide it, and my friend is ready," called out Monte Jose.

"Pard, I am ready to arrange the biz with you."

"Back to back, step off at the order march, and wheel and fire at the word halt," was Monte Jose's businesslike arrangement of the duel.

"Does that suit you, Dan?" Deadly Dick asked, with a glance at Buffalo Bill, whom he did not care to be too near.

"It does," Dan replied, and something in the expression on his face caused Monte Jose to add:

"And I shall shoot the man dead who wheels or fires before the word halt!"

An applause followed this decision, and Monte Jose called out:

"And you are satisfied, border king?"

"I could not be more pleased," was the reply, and he added:

"But I shall see that you don't skip while I am not watching you," and he sat Tiger down on a bench with a force that made his teeth rattle, and, with a few dexterous turns of his lasso, secured him there beyond escape.

"Now, sir, I am at your service," and he bowed politely to Monte Jose, who at once led him to a position in the center of the long room.

On either side now the crowd quickly formed, leaving the ends open for the bullets, should the shots miss, and a moment after Dan walked to position.

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"Don't shut off Tiger's view, please," called out Buffalo Bill, as he noticed that the followers of Dan were crowding around the bench on which he had tied the prisoner.

Many laughed at this, for they saw that the border king's desire to give Tiger a chance to witness the duel was that he should not be cut loose by his friends and skip.

So the bench was pulled up in front of the crowd, while Buffalo Bill said, pleasantly:

"It would be a shame to have the man most interested shut out from the fun."

The offhand manner of the border king somewhat dampened the spirits of Dan, who would have liked to have him show less indifference to danger.

"Back to back, gentlemen," ordered Monte Jose, and the border king took position promptly. Dan then stepped up and stood with his back to him.

"You know the terms, and you are not to draw until the word halt!"

"The man who plays false, I trump with my bullet in his heart."

"Are you ready?"

Both responded in the affirmative, and then, amid the stillness of death that followed, came the command of Monte Jose, the gambler:

"March!"

They stepped off promptly together, no one knowing except Monte Jose how many steps were to be counted.

When each man had counted seven, loud rang out the command:

"Halt!"

Dan was noted as a lightning-hand in drawing and firing, and therein lay his hope; but his weapon had just left his belt when the crack of the border king's revolver was heard, and his bullet shattered the hand of his adversary. Then came the calmly-uttered words of Buffalo Bill:

"I did not wish to kill you, but don't forget that you wear my brand."

CHAPTER III.

TRUE AS STEEL.

That Buffalo Bill could shoot as well as he threw a lasso the shattered hand of Dan gave thorough evidence.

The man was completely cowed by it, and was

silent under the cutting words of the border king, which gave him his life, but left his brand upon him.

The act of Buffalo Bill in sparing the life of the man showed that he was merciful, and he had wounded him simply to save himself, for all knew there was no mercy in Dan's makeup.

"You are lightning with your revolver, pard, and I congratulate you upon the best shot I ever saw under the circumstances."

"I am glad to know you, and when Monte Jose offers his hand in friendship, he means all that he says," and the gambler held forth his hand, which Buffalo Bill shook warmly, while he said:

"I have to thank you, sir, for my life perhaps, for those fellows intended to corner me and rescue Tiger."

"You have, indeed, stood as my friend, and I appreciate it."

"What will you do now?"

"Get my prisoner to a room in the hotel, and then leave for the fort."

"You really believe him to be the deserter you spoke of?"

"I know it, sir," and Buffalo Bill glanced quickly around to see that no one overheard him.

"I have been on his track for three months."

"Ah! then he is as good as hanged."

"About that, sir; but now let me thank you again, and say good-night, with the hope that we may meet again."

"I guess we will; but I will accompany you to the hotel, for it is better."

"I thank you," and, going up to Tiger, who was still bound by the lariat to the bench, and sat scowling with a savage countenance, the border king said:

"Now, Tresco, we will seek rest, for we start early in the morning."

"I told you that my name is not Tresco."

"Never mind; you remind me so much of Tresco that I cannot help calling you by that name."

"I am ready now."

"You nearly killed my pard, Dan, for he'll lose his arm."

"He is in great luck not to have lost his life," was the quiet response, and, having unbound his prisoner, Buffalo Bill turned to the crowd, who was watching him, many of them with admiration and a liking for his nerve and skill, and, raising his sombrero, he said, pleasantly:

"I bid you good-night, gentlemen."

"Good-night, border king," came in a roar of voices, while one said:

"Luck to you."

Then a voice called out:

"Come again when you want more of the same kind, for there are lots of Tiger's style floating around Trails Cross."

Out of the door went Buffalo Bill and his prisoner, Monte Jose having previously slipped out to await his coming.

As he did so, Deadly Dick and his followers crowded toward the door.

It was proof that they meant mischief—to try conclusions outside, and secure the prisoner, as there were full a score of them.

But the better element present at once saw their intention, the landlord of the place shouting out:

"None of that dirt shall be played on that man."

Then the crowd surged toward the door, and Deadly Dick and his followers fell back sullenly, and soon after dropped out of the saloon one by one, for Dan, accompanied by two pards, had already departed in search of the doctor. The bullet had done ugly work, breaking the bone below the wrist.

The hotel was a shanty, only deserving the name through the fact that "lodgings and meals" were to be had there, such as they were.

Buffalo Bill had put up there upon his arrival, his horse being then in the stable, and, receiving a room with two cots in it, he went there with his prisoner, accompanied by Monte Jose.

Having seen his new-found friend to his quarters, the gambler turned to go, when Tiger growled:

"I'll remember you for this night's work, Monte Jose."

"All right, don't forget me."

"You played into this stranger's hand to-night ag'in a friend."

"If trying to cheat me at cards, lying in wait to kill and rob me is friendship, then you are my friend, for I had always suspected you, Tiger, but now I am sure that my suspicions were correct."

"The border king has got you now, and, if you do manage to escape the gallows and come back here, I will warn you now that it is to be war between us."

"And, pard, let me warn you that you had better be on your guard until you get well out of Trails Cross

with your prisoner, for Deadly Dick has a bad following, and they are as treacherous as snakes."

"I thank you for your warning, Monte Jose, and shall be cautious."

With this the two parted with a shake of the hand, and then Buffalo Bill bound the prisoner to the cot he was to sleep in, though not so as to make him uncomfortable, and also turned in himself for the night.

It was just dawn when he awoke, roused his prisoner, who was either sleeping, or pretending to be, and then went to the hotel office.

The traps of Tiger were secured, for he was stopping there, and his horse was in the stable, so thither Buffalo Bill went with his man, when he had settled the score of each.

He had noted some ugly-faced men, hanging about, and they, too, had gone toward the stable. As the border king approached, out stepped Monte Jose and greeted him.

"You see, pard, a few of my friends concluded to set up and see you off, as we discovered others were going to do as much for you," and, with a laugh, Monte Jose motioned to the ugly-looking gang seen hanging about.

"You are indeed a friend, Monte Jose, and I will not forget you."

"Well, be careful on your trail, for it's a long one you have to travel," and, with this, the gambler and his half-dozen pards waved farewell, as the border king rode off with his prisoner, while those who had intended a rescue walked sullenly away.

The border king had been content with ironing the prisoner's hands when he had him at Trails Cross, but, being of a merciful nature, as soon as they were off on the trail he had shown his utter fearlessness of the man and trust in himself by taking the handcuffs off of one wrist.

He had his weapons, and so felt no dread of an escape.

Once, when the trail was a little rough, the horse of Tiger had lagged behind.

He seemed to be a well-trained animal, minding every word and sign of his rider.

"I shall have to keep a close watch on that man," muttered the border king, and he did so, without appearing to.

The trail led over a ridge, which, when crossed, brought the leader into a narrow chasm where a horse could not readily turn for fully sixty feet.

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This split in the ridge Buffalo Bill had entered, and, just as Tiger's horse neared it, the knees of his rider gave a pressure, and, like a pivot, the splendid animal wheeled on his hind legs and darted away.

Over the ridge Buffalo Bill was just in sight, and following down the winding trail he would have had to get within fifty feet to secure a shot at his man.

Then, too, he would have had to ride out of the split in the rocks, turn his horse, and by the time he came back to where the prisoner had started from, the latter would have all of a hundred and fifty feet the start, and, the winding trail preventing a shot for a mile or more, it would all depend upon the speed of the horse.

All this Tiger had studied as he went along.

He knew the place well, for it was upon his trail to his ranch, and he determined to make a bold dash for freedom.

He had an idea that Buffalo Bill did not wish to kill him, but carry him in alive, so would not fire upon him if he could.

But the border king was not caught napping, and, as quickly as the horse of Tiger wheeled, that quickly had his lariat, taken slyly in hand, been sent flying backward, and the noose caught the steed at the very start around the neck, bringing him to a halt, and choking him to a standstill.

At the same instant, he had leaped from his saddle and sprang upon the ledge, and, leaving his well-trained horse to hold the other animal, he had, with a bound, reached the side of Tiger, who, feeling that his horse was secured, had tried to escape on foot.

"Halt! hands up, Tiger, or I'll pull trigger!" cried the border king.

Tiger glanced back at his captor, and promptly obeyed, ere he had run half-a-dozen paces.

"You're a quick one with a lariat, Buffalo Bill, and hain't slow with a wepon, nuther," was the remark of the prisoner.

"Long experience in dealing with just such slippery rascals as you are has taught me what I know," was the response.

"Come, yer hain't goin' ter put ther bracelets upon me ag'in?"

"I certainly am."

"Is yer afeerd o' me, thet yer had ter iron me?"

"I am."

"Some day it will be my turn."

"Yes—every dog has his day," and the irons were

slipped upon the wrists, the lasso taken from the neck of the prisoner's horse, and, mounting, they rode on their way again.

The trail led down into a valley, and here a halt was made for a rest and dinner, and beyond their way led over a ridge to prairie land, dotted here and there with a clump of timber and crossed by an occasional stream.

Buffalo Bill had purposely left the regular trail, not caring to risk an ambush from any of Tiger's friends who had gone on ahead to be in wait for them.

He had seen a trail he did not like, and so branched off by a longer way.

As they got well out upon the prairie, he came to a sudden halt.

His keen eye had detected some moving object in the timber of the motte, or clump of trees, to the right.

"I say, Tiger, we are well up toward the Comanche country and may have to run for it; but then you are well mounted and so am I, so, if it comes to a race, we need have no fear."

"If yer see Injuns, pard, does yer intend ter let me be ironed, so as I can't help myself?"

"No, if it comes to a close call, Tiger, I shall set you free and give you your weapons to help defend yourself."

"Waal, you is generous-hearted, and I thanks you; but I does feel so awful skittish with them irons on me, I wish yer'd take 'em off."

"Wait a moment," and Buffalo Bill's eyes were searching ahead in the timber mottes.

At last he halted and said:

"There are Indians in the timber to the right and left of us, and we must dash through."

"Why not go back, pard?"

"Because there are Indians following on our trail."

"Ther mischief there be! Then we is done fer?"

"Oh no, not yet; but I will take your irons off, and, if it comes to a fight, I will give you your weapons."

"Now, yer is a gent from 'Wayback, pard Bill."

The border king at once took the irons off of his prisoner, and then said:

"Now, come, we must ride for our lives, and run the gantlet between the bands in the timber yonder."

Away the two horses bounded, Buffalo Bill leading, the prisoner close behind.

As they did so a band of half-a-dozen redskins

darted out from a clump of timber on each side of their path to head them off, and a glance behind him showed the border king that there was another party of braves pressing on in pursuit.

Instantly the border king unslung his rifle and opened fire, as he rode, first on one side, then the other, his prisoner, as he thought, following behind; but Tiger had turned to the right-about, and was flying back with all speed directly toward the pursuing Indians.

CHAPTER IV.

TREACHERY.

Feeling assured that Tiger, knowing that he need expect no mercy from the Comanches if captured, would know that his present safety lay in sticking close to him and running the gantlet between the bands coming from the clumps of timber, the border king momentarily dismissed the prisoner from his mind, and devoted his attention to the redskins.

One shot to the band on the left, two to the one on the right were fired with coolness and precision, six shots in all, and at long range.

Then he brought his rifle down to note the effect of his fire.

He had spotted a white horse on the left and had hoped to bring him down and trip others over him as he fell.

He had been successful, for the white horse had gone down with his rider, and two men close upon his heels had taken a tumble over him.

On the right, two shots had not been thrown away, long as was the range, for a horse had fallen, and a rider had been knocked out of his saddle.

"Not so bad that, Tiger, but at closer range I will do better.

"When we get just between the bands, ride up to my side, and I will give you your weapons to take care of the party on the left."

So said the border king.

But no answer came, and then, as he listened, he noticed no fall of hoofs close behind him.

Quickly he wheeled in his saddle to behold his prisoner two hundred yards away, flying like the wind straight to the band of Indians in pursuit.

"He has proved traitor.

"I was a fool to trust him.

"It is taking big chances on my own escape, but I will risk a shot at him."

So saying, he wheeled, brought his horse to a halt, and quickly leveling his rifle fired.

A shout of triumph broke from his lips as he saw the horse of the prisoner go down, and his rider fall heavily.

But at once he said:

"Poor horse! I hit you instead of your rider."

Again he wheeled in his flight, throwing cartridges into his rifle as he went along at a terrific speed, for his splendid racer was urged by the spurs to do his very best.

He realized that he had a desperate gantlet to run, rendered more so by his stopping for his shot at Tiger.

But he nerved himself to his task and went along with his eyes roving from side to side, as he counted his chances of escape.

Then, as he got within closer range, his rifle slowly went up to his right shoulder, for he meant to be deliberate.

A scattering of the band was at once seen, but he pumped out several shots, and again his wild cry rung out over the wild prairies.

Then up to his left shoulder went his rifle—for he fired from either shoulder, a feat few men can accomplish, and once again his warcry was heard.

Another moment, as, to his amazement, the two bands slackened their pace, he shot through the gantlet of death.

A volley of firearms greeted him, one shot cutting through his sombrero, another striking his saddle horn and a third wounding his horse slightly in the neck.

But he was merciful, and, as the Indians did not follow, he did not fire again.

He was not a man to take life wantonly.

Dismounting, to give his horse a breathing spell at the stream, he took his handkerchief, bathed the slight wound in the animal's neck and bound it up.

Then he looked back over the prairie with the expression of one who was surprised.

There were the three bands of Indians, gathered near the spot where he had at last fired, all in a group, and in their midst was Tiger on foot.

Four horses lay dead upon the prairie, and two redskins, while a third was lying near the group, with

several bending over him as though he was badly wounded.

This sight seemed to interest Buffalo Bill immensely, and, taking from his saddle a small field-glass, he turned it upon the redskins, who were about a score in number.

At last, after a long look, he said, in a tone of derision:

"Indians! Comanches! and mounted upon American horses, not Indian ponies!"

"Indians with no bows and arrows, Comanches without lances and with no rifles—only revolvers."

"A strange lot of Indians they are, for the face of every one of them would wash white."

"But they served their purpose, which was to rescue Tiger."

"Yes, Deadly Dick, you have accomplished your purpose, that is certain. Ah! binding Tiger to a horse to still carry out your cheat, are you? and fool me!"

"Well, I am not so easily fooled as you think; but I shall allow you to think so," and, with a light laugh, he rode away from the shelter of the willows on the bank of the little stream.

"I only wish I had known you were not Comanches sooner, and that you had no rifles, for I would have thinned out the population of Trails Cross all in my power, but I was too busy to take particular notice until after we got through, old pard," and he patted his horse affectionately.

Then he broke out into a laugh, as he continued:

"Now, was I not cleverly tricked after all?"

"What will Monte Jose have to say, and the man at Trails Cross, back there?"

"He'll tell them that it was proven that he was not the man I claimed him to be."

"Well, I have set out upon the trail of Tom Tresco, and I shall go to the end of it."

"Now, to head for Tiger's ranch and see how much of a cattleman he is."

With this, Buffalo Bill held on until he was well out of sight of the band upon the prairie.

Suddenly, he drew rein and turned back to the first stream, where he halted, as though to camp for the night, for he staked his horse out to feed, and built a small fire to cook his venison and coffee.

Then he turned in for a sleep, and at dawn was in the saddle, going back over the trail he had come.

When he had had his breakfast and started upon the back trail, Buffalo Bill rode with caution.

He was sure that the party who had rescued Tiger from him were convinced that he believed them Indians, yet they might lie in wait for him, in case he should return, and he avoided every clump of timber and rise that he could, dreading a lurking foe there.

But he found none, and went on his way back to where he had last seen the rescuers.

"As I thought," he muttered, as he drew near the spot and beheld the numerous tracks.

"Yes, shod hoofs tell the story that they were not Indians."

Coming to where the three bands had met, he saw red stains upon the ground, and then the tracks all led in one direction—off toward the range of hills far away to the right.

He followed the trail slowly, for he did not wish to be too close upon the party.

"They are a dozen or so too many for me," he said, with a laugh.

He preferred to cross the trail up among the hills.

But he found no trail to cross, and, therefore, went down the range again until he could discover it.

It had evidently not crossed the range, but branched off to the right.

Buffalo Bill appeared to understand just why, for he went along quietly and soon saw where the trail turned, and from his position he could see that it again went over the prairie, but diverged from the one by which the party had come to the hills.

Right where the trail turned, the party had halted and camped for the night.

Over under a pine on the hillside, and upon the wavy bank of a rivulet, he beheld three graves.

They had been freshly made; and across them had been piled timber to keep the wolves from digging up the dead.

"One will tell the story, though I hardly need any better proof than I have already," he said, aloud.

"It is a bad business, this, opening a grave, but then I suppose I should do so to make a certainty doubly sure."

With this, he removed the logs from one of the graves and began to throw out the loose earth with his large stirrup, which he took from the saddle for the purpose.

It was a tedious task, and not a pleasant one, when

he recalled that his own hand had taken the life of the man in the grave.

Those who had buried him there had not slighted their work, for the grave was a deep one, and the others slain had been placed in separate resting-places.

He dug on until at last he felt his hand touch a body.

It was enveloped in a blanket, bound around with a lariat.

Unfolding the blanket, Bill beheld him—hands crossed, and the face washed of its red paint, for it was a white man.

"I remember him—he was one of Deadly Dick's band at the saloon the night before last.

"He played Injun once too often, and, if Tiger got free, it cost three lives to rescue him.

"Well, I have nothing against him now, poor fellow, so I will bury him again as I found him, though I doubt if he would do as much for me."

Buffalo Bill began to envelope the body in the blanket again, when he stopped suddenly.

His eye became riveted upon the palm of the left hand of the corpse.

There, pricked in most skillfully, was a tiger, stripes and all, tattooed by a master hand in India ink.

"Well!" and the words broke very forcibly from the lips of the border king; "all as plain as the nose on a Jew's face!"

"'Tiger,' and more; it means that this man is one of a band, or I am mistaken. But I am in no hurry, so I'll see if the others are branded as this one is. If so, the live ones who wear the brand are my game, for it implies a great deal."

He did not then bury the body he had exhumed, but went to work throwing the timber off the other graves.

CHAPTER V.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

The task was completed at last, and he had the other two bodies unwrapped before him.

Then he took up the right hand of one.

An attempt had been made to wash it, as a preparation for burial, but it was unsuccessful, for the dirt was of long standing, and the man had been a

stranger to soap for many a long week, if appearances spoke for anything.

Then Buffalo Bill took up the left hand, and there, through the vista of dirt, was seen the tiger.

The face, too, he remembered to have seen at the saloon two nights before, and among those who had been Dan's backers.

"Now for number three."

One touch of the hand, which was small, delicate and clean, and the face of Buffalo Bill, the border king, blanched white, while from his lips broke the startling words:

"Great God! This man has been buried alive!"

Instantly he dropped his head upon the breast of the man, and listened with his ear pressed close to his heart.

"It beats faintly! The man is alive!

"Now to see where he is wounded!"

There was a wound in the head, the bullet having entered at one side.

Down to the brook sprung the border king, filling his sombrero with water, and quickly bathed the wound and the face.

Then he rubbed the pulseless hands and limbs, and poured from a small flask he carried some liquor into the mouth, and bathed his face with it as well.

It was a long task, but at last respiration began, at first in gasps, then slowly, and with more regularity, until the warm blood began to course through the veins, and life came swinging back into the body which had been, some hours before, placed in the grave as dead.

Raising in his arms the form as tenderly as though he had been an infant, he bore it away from the sight of the other bodies, and placed it upon his own blanket.

He was all tenderness now, this strong, nervy man, who held no fear and would kill a foe without mercy.

He had a big heart, and it was in the right place!

He was revealing now that human nature governed him by his treatment of this enemy, who had sought his life in his strength, and now, in his weakness, appealed to his mercy.

He arranged the blankets for him, gave him another swallow of liquor, and sat clasping his hands for full an hour.

At last the eyes opened slowly, and looked squarely up into the skies.

Buffalo Bill spoke, in a low, gentle voice:

"You are all right now, pard, so have no fear."

The eyes closed again, and it seemed an age before they were reopened; but at last the lids parted, and the eyes were fixed upon the face of the rescuer.

"Well, pard, you are better, I am glad to see."

There was no start of surprise, no recognition, no reply, but the eyes looked steadily into those of the border king, who again spoke:

"You got a wound in your head, but I have not examined it closely. May I do so now?"

Still no reply, and, taking silence as consent, Bill turned the head upon one side and critically examined the wound.

The bullet had torn along the side of the skull, just over and beyond the left ear, fracturing the bone, but not penetrating to the brain.

"I don't think it is so bad as I first thought. I will do all I can for you, pard, and then take you to where you will be cared for," and he went to his saddle and took from the pocket several handkerchiefs, along with a bottle of witch hazel, and, saturating the cloths, bound them firmly upon the wounds.

"We plainsmen have to be our own doctors, you know, pard, so I go prepared for shots and bruises."

"Now, take a nap while I get ready for the trail, for it's forty long miles to where I shall take you; but there you'll find a doctor, and good quarters, so cheer up."

Still no reply, no sign of recognition; so he went back up the hill to the graves, bound up the remaining body in its blanket, as he had the other, and placed each in its grave.

Then he worked hard and rapidly, filled in the graves, replaced the timbers upon them, over the empty one as over the others that held bodies, and, going to his horse, saddled and bridled him.

The blanket taken from about the man who had been buried alive, he took, as also the lariat, and, adjusting his stirrups, he led the horse up to where the wounded man lay.

"Come, pard, we will take the trail now. Let me help you."

He aided him to rise, and no word came from him.

Then, seeing how weak he was, the scout raised him bodily and placed him in the saddle, wrapping his blankets about him as a support, and fastening them with the lariat.

"Now, we are ready, pard," he said, in a kindly way, and added:

"He is a mere boy, not over eighteen; but the brand of the tiger is in his hand."

Down the trail went Buffalo Bill on foot, his horse following with the wounded man, silent and seeming to be in suffering.

Reaching the valley at the base of the foothills, Buffalo Bill skirted the range, keeping up his steady walk for a couple of hours, his horse following patiently.

Several times had he spoken to the wounded man, but each time he had received no reply.

It did not anger him, for something told him that the blow he had received was a severe one, and that it might have dazed him utterly.

Still he was determined to keep his eye upon him, for the man might be playing a part, and only watching a chance to escape.

Turning to look at him from time to time, he met that same stony stare which looked at him, yet appeared not to see him.

At length he halted for rest and food, and again spread his blankets for the wounded prisoner, if he could regard him in that light.

He placed the form upon them, bathed his head and saturated the cloth once more, after which he bound the wound up as before.

The wounded man was given the best the scout had, but cared for nothing except a cup of coffee, which he drank greedily.

Once more then he started upon his journey, for he was anxious to get the man under the care of a skilled physician as soon as was possible to do so, and, having to walk the distance himself, he knew that it would take him all night to make the journey.

He had regarded the wounded man attentively as he lay upon the blankets.

What he saw was a youth, scarcely over eighteen he seemed, with a face cast in a refined mold.

His hair was black, and hung in curls below his shoulders about his neck.

His form was slender, graceful and wiry, and clad in a suit of corduroy, sack coat, and the pants stuck in boots, the tops of which came above the knees.

His eyes were large, but now expressionless. Under different circumstances he would have called him handsome—a very handsome young man.

His weapons were gone, and he had evidently been

hastily wrapped in his blanket and buried, his comrades taking only his arms.

Such was the individual now thrown upon the mercy of the border king in so strange a manner, and the one who was now as gentle to him as he would have been to a woman, muttered as he trudged along:

"It was a sad day for you, my young pard, when you left the shelter of your home and came West.

"Well, I only hope you will get well, and maybe I can convince you that you and I ought to be pards; not you and those cutthroats that follow Tiger's lead, for I am fully convinced that Tiger is the leader of an outlaw band.

"Well, it will be a pleasant duty to find out, for, as I have set out on Tiger's trail, I'll see the end of it."

Just at dark another halt was made, and the wounded man was given an hour's rest, while his wound was again dressed most tenderly.

Still not a word did he utter, no reply would he make to any question, only the deathlike stare which he had had since the border king had first seen him open his eyes.

"I only hope that you are not playing a part, pard, for I would hate to have to wing you, as perhaps you may reform from your evil ways.

"But I warn you that I will stand no monkey business if you go to skip away from me in the darkness."

But if the man heard and understood, he played his part to perfection, for not an expression on his face revealed the fact that he was conscious of the threat made by the border king.

Thus on through the night, with several halts, they went.

At each halting-place the scout had moistened the wound, given the man a rest of some little time, and done all in his power to make him comfortable.

Twice he had made coffee for him, and each time it had been swallowed with the greatest relish, though food he would not take.

The last part of the way lay over prairie lands, and, as the dawn drew near, afar off was visible a twinkling light.

"Yonder is where we halt, pard; where you see the light."

But still no reply from the wounded man.

The dawn came and revealed a beautiful rolling prairie for miles around, which was broken a couple of miles ahead by a slight ridge, heavily timbered,

and along the base of which ran one of those crystal streams which so often break the landscape of Texas.

Upon the ridge some daring settler had established his home, a commodious structure of logs, containing half a score of rooms, and completely surrounded by a shed, which served as a piazza.

It was fenced in, with a garden in the rear, extensive outbuildings, some cornfields over on the slope, and prairie pasture lands for miles around, whereon many cattle were grazing, with also a large herd of ponies and a flock of sheep.

It was a perfect border home, luxurious for that far land, and its owner had dared settle down where at any moment a band of Comanches might make a dash upon him, or, what was equally to be dreaded, lawless raiders from across the Rio Grande might be tempted to loot his hacienda.

CHAPTER VI.

SOLDIERS' RANCH.

Soldiers' Ranch was one of the finest and most hospitable homes on the Texas frontier.

Captain Edward Hass, as he was more generally called, had been a surgeon in the United States Army, stationed at a fort on the Rio Grande, and had been with his troop of cavalry when they had rescued from an outlaw band a beautiful Mexican girl captured and held for ransom.

It was Surgeon Hass' pleasing duty to escort Marie Inglez to her father's home across the Rio Grande, and the friendship thus begun ended in her becoming Mrs. Hass in less than a year after.

As her father had left her a goodly number of cattle, and Surgeon Hass did not care to make a Mexican of himself, though he had been most willing to have a fair Mexican turn American, he had resigned from the army and established for himself a home in Texas.

It was upon the very spot where the rescue of Marie Inglez had taken place, and he had at that time remarked if ever he had a ranch, that would be where he would pitch his tent.

A number of cavalry, whose term of enlistment had expired, were easily persuaded to turn from the blue to the buckskin, the sword to the lariat, and become cowboys at "Soldiers' Ranch," as the doctor had named his home.

And here had Ed Hass made his home with his

beautiful wife, half-a-dozen peon servants, who had followed their loved mistress from the Mexican hacienda to Texas, and a score of gallant ex-cavalry-men turned into cowboys.

The danger of the site of Soldiers' Ranch caused the surgeon to organize his men into rangers for protection, and the cowboys of several other ranches, far distant from Soldiers' Ranch, joined the band, which at once became known as minutemen.

A gallant lot they were, too, as they had shown in a number of hot fights with the Comanches and lawless invaders from Mexico.

A perfect soldier, a genial gentleman and hospitable host, Captain Hass was known and respected far and wide, and never did he fail to answer a call for his services as physician, no matter what the hardship of his going would be.

A child, a little daughter, had been born to them after the captain and his wife moved to Soldiers' Ranch.

The little belle was at once taken in charge by her father, to make a "prairie girl" out of her, as he expressed it.

His training outdoors, with her mother's training within, promised to make an accomplished lady as well as a heroine out of the little daughter.

The cowboys greeted Buffalo Bill as he came across the prairie with a cheer of welcome, for all knew what his courage was, and acknowledged his superior skill as a prairie man.

"What have you there, Border King?" asked one, as he saw his greeting to the wounded man was not returned.

"A poor fellow who has been wounded, and I am hastening on to have the captain try his surgical skill upon him."

So on he went, while the cowboys returned to their duties, discussing the coming of the border king, and convinced that he could tell them much more about the silent stranger if he had cared to do so.

Upon his piazza sat Captain Hass, awaiting the coming of his wife and daughter to go into breakfast.

He was a handsome man, of soldierly form, bearded face and with a bright eye that looked straight into your own as only an honest man's can.

He spied Buffalo Bill afar off, took a glass from a bracket, and, turning it upon him, said, in a tone of pleasure:

"It is the border king, and on foot! And he has a comrade with him, who rides his horse.

"They travel slowly for men whom a good breakfast awaits, but his friend must be wounded from the way they come."

Then, seeing the cowboys gallop toward him, he said, with some impatience:

"The boys will detain him, I fear, for they must know all that he can tell.

"No; he comes on, with only a short delay."

Stepping inside the hall, he called out:

"Marie! Belle! there is an old friend coming across the prairie, so be ready to welcome him.

"And he has a pard with him, too," added the captain, as he returned to the piazza.

Across the stream came Bill and his wounded companion, up to the rise to the gate, which a peon threw open for him, and, as he reached the rack where horses were hitched, Captain Hass met him.

"Bill, I am most glad to see you, for you have given us the go-by for several months."

"And I am glad to get here, Captain Hass, for I have hoofed it since noon yesterday, coming from up in the Blue Range country."

"You look haggard and tired, but I'll soon freshen you up—oh! your comrade appears to be wounded?"

"He is, sir, and I brought him to you here, thinking you would care for him."

"With all my heart."

"Come, my friend, you are welcome here, and I will soon bring you round all right."

The captain caught Bill's significant look as the latter said:

"I thought you would give him the little room off your little office there, in the yard, and he will need some one to take care of him, sir."

"Old Lulu, my wife's old peon nurse, is the best one in the world."

"Come, we will go to the cabin at once."

Tenderly Bill took the wounded man from his saddle, and half-carried him to the little cabin of two rooms, which stood apart from the main house, and was known as the "office."

Captain Hass, who was a skilled surgeon, at once sent for Lulu, the peon nurse, and the stranger was soon placed upon a bed and a dose of medicine administered.

"I will look at your wound presently, sir," he said,

as he left him in the care of Lulu, who seemed to know just what to do.

But the stranger vouchsafed no reply, and as the captain and Bill left the cabin together, the latter said:

"What do you think of him, sir?"

"Mad as a March hare."

"You think so, sir?"

"Did you notice his eyes?"

"Yes, captain; but might he not be playing 'possum?"

"Not he; that man is mad."

"Well, sir, so I feared, but I yet wished to have your opinion without having told you anything about him."

"The wound has made him so, Cody, and when I look at it I can tell just what his chances are."

"He has fever coming on, and the wound may be fatal."

"The bullet did not enter his head, sir, but glanced on the skull, fracturing it."

"Well, I shall soon know, for I gave him something to put him to sleep, and after breakfast we will see to him."

"But who shot him?"

"I did, sir."

"You?"

"Yes, sir."

"The mystery deepens; but come, I will show you to your room, and while you freshen up I will hear what you have to tell, if you care to have me know."

"Oh, yes, sir, I wish you to know all, and I need your service and advice, for if that man was conscious of where I took him from I do not wonder that he is mad."

"You interest me, Bill; but here is your room, and I am a good listener."

With this hint the border king made known to Captain Hass, in confidence, all that he had passed through.

"You see, Captain Hass," he said, after the ranchero had listened attentively to all he had to tell, "I volunteered up at the fort to capture the Man-Tiger."

"A wagon-train was robbed some time ago by a man answering his description, though his followers were Comanches."

"Then the Santa Fe stage was held up by one man and its passengers robbed."

"I went to his ranch, and found that he was absent from it at the time of the two robberies, and so I told Colonel Miles that I would see if I could not capture Tiger and prove the robberies upon him."

"A bold undertaking to capture that man from all I have heard of him, Bill; but have you given up?"

"No, sir; I will take him yet."

CHAPTER VII.

HE MUST LIVE.

Mrs. Hass, speaking English with an accent that was very fascinating, met the border king in a way that showed how welcome he was.

Both her little hands clasped over his honest one, and said:

"It is kind of you to come to us sometimes, señor, to show that we are not forgotten."

Belle, her daughter, went up to the border king, and, grasping his hand, said, in her frank, sweet way:

"I am so glad to see you, Chief Cody, and, knowing how welcome you are, why do you come so seldom?"

Soldiers' Ranch was noted for its bountiful table, and, in spite of his fatigue, Bill enjoyed his breakfast immensely.

"And now to that poor fellow, captain."

"Do you remember when you shot him?"

"Yes, sir. I think he rode a spotted horse, now I recall his dress; and I aimed at his head, though the range was long."

"Was he not the wounded one you saw the outlaws grouped around?"

"I think not, sir, for, being wounded in the head and lying motionless, they supposed him to be dead and threw him across a horse, to carry off to where they buried him."

"But why should such men take such pains to bury their dead?"

"Superstition alone, sir, for, being criminals, they are superstitious."

"I believe you are right; but when do you think he was buried?"

"About dawn, sir, and the men hastened away."

"So he was how long in the grave?"

"Perhaps not long."

All this time the captain was getting out the surgical instruments he would need, sending for warm

water, and preparing for what might have to be done in the way of an operation.

Being ready, he went into the room, and the two sat down by the patient.

Taking his pulse and temperature, the captain then unbandaged the head, cut away the mass of curling hair close to the scalp, so as to expose the wound fully to view, and then began to probe to see just what damage the bullet had done.

The border king watched him with the deepest attention, for somehow he had become strangely interested in this unknown youth.

Taking away pieces of the bone, the captain cleansed the wound thoroughly, and then said:

"I believe he will live, Bill; yes, he must not die, for in him rests the solving of this mystery of the branded hand."

"Ah! you think he will——"

"He will betray his companions to you," was the significant response of Captain Hass, and it set the border king to thinking.

All he had done for the wounded prisoner had been from the goodness of his heart.

He had not thought of the future, or what use the man might be to him.

Naturally, rescued from such a fate as would have been his but for the border king, the young man would regard the claim of his preserver upon him above all other claims.

He would be willing, Bill thought, to tell all he knew about the band, of which the brand in his hand showed that he was a member.

Tiger had been considered a ranchero upon a small scale, wild and reckless to desperation when on a spree, yet not one who had been guilty of any lawless act beyond his shooting scrapes under the influence of drink.

Of him nothing was known other than his boast, when he got maddened by liquor, that there was a price on his head.

Those who had taken him at his word, with one exception, had regretted it, and the reader knows that Buffalo Bill was the exception.

He had suspected the man of being a fugitive from justice, and knowing that one answering his description had killed and robbed a paymaster and deserted from the army, a man by the name of Tom Tresco, he had jumped at the conclusion that he had his man when he saw the "T. T., U. S. A.," in India ink on

the right wrist as he held his revolver above his head, defying the crowd.

Having started upon this trail, Buffalo Bill meant to stick to it.

Whether the Tiger had the star and tiger brand on his hand or not he had not observed.

That he had been most cleverly rescued from him he did know, and he was sure that there must be an organized band, of which he was chief, to have so well planned and executed the rescue.

The band, if such existed, was for a purpose certainly lawless, and to run them to earth the border king made up his mind should be his work.

Holding the position of chief of scouts of the government, he had a daring, able lot of men to call to his aid if need be, and, after a long talk with Captain Hass, he said:

"Now, my duty is plain, sir, for I shall go to the fort, get an indefinite leave from the colonel, and post my boys as to what I wish them to do."

"They will be better than soldiers, Bill, in an affair of this kind," said Captain Hass.

"Yes, so I think, sir, and I shall use them to the best advantage; but now I shall go to the fort and return by Tiger's ranch, and see if I can catch him there——"

"Be careful, for if he has a band, as you suspect, some of them he evidently keeps within call."

"Yes, sir, doubtless; but I shall go prepared against treachery."

"If he is not there I shall return to Trails Cross, and see if he has returned there."

"And there, too, you must be careful, for if he had so many rescuers at short notice, they will be there, too."

"Yes, sir, but I have a friend there in Monte Jose, the gambler, of whom I spoke, and there is a better element at Trails Cross, that held the lawless ones in check, or I would never have been able to have gotten away with my prisoner."

"Well, Cody, I have confidence in you, and you know just what you are about."

"If you need any aid that I or my men can give you, do not hesitate to ask it."

"I thank you, sir; but now, please, tell me just what you think of this wounded man?"

"Well, he has fever, though no inflammation has set in."

"When I break his fever I will know if his reason has come back to him or been destroyed by the shock."

"If his reason is gone, Captain Hass?"

"Well, I believe that I can, by a surgical operation, restore him to reason."

"I sincerely hope so."

"The wound is not a fatal one, unless inflammation follows."

"He is young, in good health, and has a strong constitution, and may pull through to perfect restoration, while, again, though physically restored, mentally he may be a wreck."

"So I at present see his case; but he shall have every attention, and old Lulu seems devoted to him in a wonderful degree, from some strange reason I cannot understand; but she acts as though she knew him."

"This is strange, and it would be well, sir, to keep a watch on her and find out."

"Yes, I shall do so."

"Especially when he is recovering, for he might pretend to be worse than he really is, and some night might give us the slip."

"I'll see that he does not do that; but you consider him a prisoner, then?"

"Well, sir, I hardly know how to consider him."

"To all intents and purposes, he suffered death for his crime, and was buried."

"Now I dug him out of the grave, and though I believe I would set him free if he asked it, still I hope to discover from him, as you suggested, some clew to the lawless band of which he surely is a member."

"Well, Bill, I'll see that he recovers, if recovery is possible, and that he does not escape from us, so rest assured on that matter."

"I will, sir, and now I must say good-by," and half-an-hour after the border king departed from Soldiers' Ranch.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TIGER'S LAD.

Buffalo Bill wended his way to take the trail which would lead him on to Fort D—.

He rode like one ever on the alert for danger, from instinct and a long habit of watchfulness, rather

than as though he was looking for any particular peril to bar his way.

Not a leaf rustled by the wind, the spring of a rabbit in the brush, or a squirrel in the trees but caught his keen eyes, and his horse seemed to have the same watchfulness about him, for his ears were constantly pricked for some discovery.

He knew of a camping-place off the trail a short distance, some miles ahead, and so he held on his way until he reached it.

A fire was soon burning in a cañon, sheltered from view, his horse had been watered and was feeding upon the tender grass, and the cowboy chief soon broiled a tender steak, brought with him from Soldiers' Ranch, and ate supper with the relish of a good appetite and perfect digestion.

Then he wrapped himself in his blankets, and went to sleep like a man with a consciousness of having wronged no man intentionally.

Bright and early he was on his way again, and, coming to a crossing of the trails, he halted like one in a quandary.

At last he mused aloud:

"He would hardly return so soon to Trails Cross, and so must have gone to his ranch."

"Yes, I will go by and make a call, for he only has a couple of cowboys with him, I have heard."

So the border king branched off on the trail that led him toward the Rio Grande.

It was late in the evening when he dismounted upon a hill, and, creeping up to the top, looked over.

There, a mile away, rose a hill like a sugar loaf, yet connected with the range upon which he stood with a low but rugged ridge, that could not be crossed by a horseman.

"Ah! now I discover a secret of that ridge I did not know before," he said, as he turned his glass upon it.

"Although one cannot cross it, between those hills and yonder sentinel-like mound, from there here is a trail along it that can be followed."

"This gives Tiger a good chance of escape in the rear if crowded in front."

"Well, he has a snug cabin there, strong as a fort, and mighty few cattle."

"I guess I'll take the ridge trail to the cabin, if I can find the end of it while daylight lasts."

He at once set about his search, and where many

would have failed who were less skillful prairie men, he was successful, just as night came on.

"We will see if yonder cabin is hospitable enough to give shelter to man and beast," he said, as he returned to his horse.

Bidding him follow him, the cowboy chief led the way on foot, and entered upon the ridge trail leading to the sugar-loaflike hill a mile distant.

It was night now, and as he went along he heard the loud baying of a dog.

"Ah! that won't do.

"I must not let him know that I have found he has a way of retreat.

"Come, pard, we will go back and approach the cabin by the regular trail."

With the patience of an Indian, and taking everything that barred his way as a matter of course, he retraced his steps to the hill, and, flanking it, wound off toward the solitary cabin of Tiger, far from the nearest settlement and so utterly alone.

He approached the hill from the regular trail, and again heard the loud barking of a dog.

As he drew nearer, another dog joined in.

"Big dogs from their bark.

"Ah! a third chips in the chorus.

"Well, Tiger is determined to know when he has visitors coming, be they friends or foes.

"It is too dark for him to recognize me, if he is here, so I'll ride up and be ready for him.

"Some one is at home, for there is a light in the cabin.

"I'll bet ten to one it was not put there to welcome me," and he laughed.

He watched the cabin closely as he approached, and beheld a flash of light, which showed that a door had been quickly opened and closed.

"Ah! somebody came out then and has position on me; but I must go on now."

To show that he was not making a quiet approach upon the cabin, he called out to the dogs:

"Oh, stop your barking, dogs, for you have roused everybody, if they are not deaf or dead."

It was a disappointment to the border king to find the place guarded by dogs, for had it not been he could have reconnoitered most thoroughly on foot.

As he drew nearer, although he was well aware that some one was lurking in the shadow, doubtless covering him with a rifle, he called out:

"Ho, there! can a wayfarer get shelter and food?"

"Who are you?" asked a voice nearer to him than he had supposed him to be.

"A scout, pard, and used up by a hard ride."

"I saw your light and came here."

"Are you alone?"

"My horse and myself are all."

"Where are you from?"

"The lower settlements, and bound northward to the fort."

"All right; I guess you can get shelter here."

"Thank you, pard; but whose ranch is this?"

"Thomas Tracey's."

"Well, you are a bold man to settle this far from help in time of need."

"I am not Tom Tracey, but his herder."

"Ah! and is the boss at home?"

"No, but we are expecting him soon."

"All right, pard; now show me where I can put up my horse, for he's the first to be cared for."

The man, driving back the dogs, led the way to the rear of the cabin, where there was a shelter of logs, and some haystacks near.

"You'll find hay in plenty, and can put him in there, for our horses are down in the corral."

Having seen to the comfort of his horse, Bill followed the man into the cabin, and what he beheld there took him completely by surprise.

As he approached the cabin he saw that it was of logs, with an open space between, and two rooms on either side, while in the rear was a small hut, evidently used as a kitchen and eating-room.

The cabin was stoutly built, and looked as though it might stand a siege of an enemy for days.

It was upon the top of the hill, with steep, rugged ground on either side, but sloping off gently toward the rear, and in front was a broad trail, coming straight up to a stockade wall that surrounded the acre of land that comprised the summit.

The light he had seen came from the kitchen in the rear, and he had not observed any sign of the large cabin being occupied until his guide threw open the door, and said:

"Walk in, stranger, and feel at home."

Then it was that Bill Cody met with a surprise, for there before him was a large room, with a rag-carpet upon the floor and considerable furniture.

There were in the room three persons—a young woman, a negress and a man.

It was the first that riveted the gaze of the scout

chief, for she was scarcely over twenty, and very pretty in face and form.

In her hands she held a Spanish guitar, as though she had just been playing upon it when interrupted by the coming of the visitor.

As the scout beheld her he doffed his sombrero quickly and bowed, while he said in a courteous way:

"I did not expect to intrude upon a lady's presence when I came here, and I hope you will pardon me."

The woman gave a slight start, but rose quickly, and said:

"You are welcome, sir, and in the absence of my husband, you will have to submit to a hostess, for I am Mrs. Tracey."

Bill was almost overwhelmed by what she said.

This beautiful creature the wife of the Man-Tiger, the wild ranchero, as he was called?

He could hardly believe he had heard aright, yet he dared not exhibit surprise, it not being supposed that he knew Tiger.

"I thank you, miss—I beg pardon, madam," he said.

"You have not allowed me the pleasure of knowing your name, sir?"

"My name is Cody, madam, and I am a scout at Fort D—."

"Well, you are welcome, and Aunt Venus had just called us to supper when the dog announced your arrival."

"Aunt Venus" was the old negress, who acted as cook.

Then, in the same easy way, she continued:

"You will find friends here in these two gentlemen, who care for my husband's herds, cowboys, Doc Barney and Si Dunn."

The two cowboys greeted the stranger with a nod at this introduction, and Mrs. Tracey led Bill out to supper, whither Aunt Venus had gone to set another plate.

The two cowboys followed, and the border king distinctively overheard one whisper to the other:

"It's Buffalo Bill."

The visitor made himself very agreeable at the supper, and asked Mrs. Tracey if she was not afraid to live so far away from all help.

"Oh, no; our house is a stout one, and the Indians would get only lead if they came, for we are not rich."

"And do the Mexicans never make a dash upon you here?"

"No, we are not troubled by them."

"The truth is, my husband has a reputation that keeps Mexican raiders and Comanches away."

"You may have heard of him, Mr. Cody?"

"Mr. Thomas Tracey I believe is his name?"

"Well, he is better known as the Tiger, or Man-Tiger, of Texas."

"Ah, yes, I have heard of him," innocently said the border king.

"Yes, he has a reputation that is pretty well known as a very deadly foe and desperate character, and yet I have always found poor Tom as gentle as a woman in his nature."

"I wish you could have seen him at Trails Cross," thought Bill, but he simply bowed, and concluded it was a case of "Beauty and the Beast."

The border king greatly enjoyed Aunt Venus' good cooking, and after supper they adjourned to the sitting-room again, off which was the sleeping-room of the strange woman, as Bill regarded her, for certainly it was a mystery to see this beautiful creature dwelling there; and, more still, as the wife of a man who was a very demon in his nature, and an outlaw and desperado.

"Will you sing something for me, please?" asked the border king.

"I will sing with pleasure for you, Mr. Cody, for I often do so to amuse the boys here and Aunt Venus."

The "boys" were the two cowboys, with faces that Bill was not at all drawn to, as he had already decided:

"If Si Dunn and Doc Barney are not rascals, their faces give their natures the lie," he had said to himself.

Running her fingers lightly over the strings of the guitar, she asked:

"What style of music do you like, Mr. Cody?"

"Any you care to sing."

A number of songs she sung, and when at last Buffalo Bill went across the open hall, to the room Si Dunn led him to, he found himself asking the question over and over again:

"Can that woman be wicked?"

"Can her face hide a devil's heart?"

This room had the same air of comfort which was to be found in the rest of this frontier house, show-

ing the hand of a refined woman and good house-keeper.

He supposed that the room next to him was that of the cowboys, and, though he felt no fear of an attack, or underhand work, with that woman in the house, he looked well to the chances of defense and escape.

He knew well his danger, for, after all, Tiger might be about the cabin, perhaps in it, and if so a plot against his life was sure to follow.

If the desperado had not returned home, or sent word of the affair at Trails Cross, then he had nothing to dread.

But he had been let into a secret which he had not suspected, the presence of that beautiful woman in the house of the desperate ranchero.

So Bill lay down upon the cot, with his hand conveniently near his revolver.

Hardly had he left the sitting-room, however, when there was a change in the manner of those present.

The man who had shown him to his room returned, and said:

"All right, captain."

Then a wide plank in the ceiling was removed, a rope-ladder fell to the floor, and a man descended into the room.

A man of giant stature, long-haired and bearded; dressed as a borderman, and armed thoroughly.

"Well, I nearly smothered in that rat-hole, waiting for that fellow to go to bed," he said, roughly.

Then, turning to Aunt Venus, who was present, he continued:

"Bring my supper in here, Black Venus."

"And why was it necessary for you to hide from one man, Tom?" calmly asked the woman.

"Did he not tell you his name?"

"Yes; Cody."

"It is Buffalo Bill."

"So I heard Si Dunn whisper to Doc Barney, and he heard it, too."

"You know now, then, Valerie, why I hid from him?"

"No, I cannot guess why."

"He is but one man, though I admit one who looks every inch a man and who could be a dangerous foe, or good friend."

"I liked his appearance."

"Well, I don't, and as I arrived only ten minutes

ahead of him I had no time to tell you what happened at the settlements, and which that man was the main mover in.

"When I tell you he is also known as the Border King, Wild Rider and the Demon Scout, you may understand why he is to be feared, Valerie."

"Ah, yes, I know him under his border name better than by his own name."

"So he is the border king, is he?"

"Yes."

"Well, he looks it; but here is your supper, and when you have eaten it tell us all about your trip."

The man laughed bitterly, but ate his supper, and then turned to his wife, and said:

"I never came so near death before in my life as I did at Trails Cross."

"I have feared trouble for you at your every visit there, Tom."

"Still I have to go; but I cannot curb my love for drink—it maddens me, and for once I met my match."

"Ah! can that be true?"

"I was overmatched, in fact."

"And the man?"

"Left this room half-an-hour ago."

"Cody?"

"Yes."

"I am interested, so tell me all about it," and the woman showed a strange interest to know what had happened, while Si Dunn asked:

"Does yer mean, cap'n, that Buffalo Bill was too many for you?"

"I can't believe it," Doc Barney said.

"Maybe yer wasn't feelin' jist well, honey," Black Venus said, in a growling tone.

"I was never feeling better in my life, for I was drunk."

"I had just won considerable money, and I threw out a defiance I am given to when liquor makes a fool of me."

"But before, when I have done so, it was the man who took it up that led the funeral procession, while this time I very nearly did so."

"But you were not wounded, Tom?"

"No, Valerie."

"Pray relieve my suspense," the woman said, impatiently.

"Well, I had my revolver raised, ready to drop on the man I saw attempt to draw, when all of a sudden

that lasso demon dropped his lariat over my arm, and I was dragged to the floor and ironed in an instant—before I understood what had happened."

"This is remarkable, Tom."

"It is true, and my pards chipped in to help me out, but it was no use, for he bettered Deadly Dick and put a bullet into Dan's wrist, and took me off a prisoner, for Monte Jose and others backed him up, and our few dared not be too brash."

"They would have rescued me that night had it not been for Monte Jose; but they tried it on the next day on the trail, and here I am."

"But how, Tom?"

"Well, they played Comanche, headed us off and showed up in three bands, ahead and in our rear."

"Cody took my irons off, and said we would dash through, while, if it came to a hot fight, he would give me my weapons."

"That was manly in him."

"Bah! don't say anything in his favor, Valerie, for I hate him worse than I do a snake, but it is my in-

ning now."

"What do you mean?"

"I am telling you how I escaped."

"Yes, and I am anxious to know."

"We made a dash through, the scout using his rifle, and doing it well, too, when I turned and ran back to the party behind."

"When he saw me, he stopped—close pressed as he was—and sent a shot at me that killed my horse."

"Then he got through, but, had my men had rifles, he could never have run the gantlet he did."

"We put for the hills, planted our dead, and the men disbanded after leaving the range, I coming here by slow trips, and here I find the border king on my trail, coming in not ten minutes behind me."

"Now, do you believe he is alone; that is the question?"

CHAPTER IX.

A PLOT.

In response to the question of the Tiger if the scout were alone, Si Dunn responded:

"He surely is, cap'n; for them dogs never barked when you come, as they know'd yer, and when they just got a scent of a stranger afar off, they at once let us know to the last."

"Then he came to ther house, seein' ther light, and they cry ag'in."

"Now, ef he hed any pards with him, then they would let us know."

"That looks reasonable, Si."

"Did you not say he was alone, after you left him, Tom?"

"Yes, Valerie."

"Well, he has just come by here to see if you had returned, giving you good time to reach home, and wishing to see where and how you lived."

"But has he not trailed me, for he is the best trailer in the West?"

"It may be."

"And he knows I am here."

"Perhaps he does."

"Then he has come here to attempt my capture?"

"It would look so, Tom."

"Then that settles it with him."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to kill him, that is all."

"No."

"I say yes."

"See here, Tom, that man is in government service, and if he disappears, mind you, I say disappears, then he will be looked up, his quarrel with you found out, and you will no longer be able to live in your home, and just when affairs seem brightening in our life."

"I shall kill him, Valerie."

"Of all the mistakes of your life, Tom, this will be the greatest one."

"Oh! I shall let it be thought the Comanches killed him."

"You cannot deceive the men who will be set to find out what his fate has been."

"If I do not kill him, he will kill me."

"No, why should he now?"

"He has an idea that I am—well, you know who I mean, Valerie."

The woman's face paled at the words, and she said:

"Well, wait until he comes to kill, or arrest you, then act."

"He is prepared now for that purpose."

"I think not."

"Then why is he here?"

The woman was silent, and again the Tiger said:

"No one knows he has come here, if he is alone, and we could finish him in safety."

In an instant the woman was upon her feet, her eyes flashing, while she said, in a voice that was full of meaning:

"Dare to play that game and I will befriend him myself."

"No, if you are afraid to meet a man squarely, face to face, you shall not assassinate him in my presence!"

The ranchero was silent.

He did not show the tiger in his nature then, and the two cowboys seemed to stand in awe also of the fearless woman who had been so suddenly aroused to resentment.

"Well, Valerie, if you decide against me, I must yield," tamely said Tiger, and his bearing carried out the assertion of the woman to Buffalo Bill that the ranchero "was as gentle as a woman toward her."

"Now, you are acting as you should, Tom, for the border king is not a man to be killed from an ambush, for then the government would avenge him, mark my words."

"If you think he has comrades with him, let Si and Doc make a complete circuit of the place, each carrying a dog with him, and returning before dawn."

"After breakfast, he will go on his way, mark my words, and there will be no reason to dread him more."

The ranchero gave a quick glance at the two cowboys, and replied:

"Then you two can make a scout around the ranch, and see if there is anything suspicious about."

"I will go and see you off, and then return to rest, for I am worn out."

He went out with the two men, and, once away from the house, he said:

"That man must die!"

"Yes, cap'n," was the reply of each.

"But not here."

"No, cap'n."

"I will leave the house before dawn, and will take position at Red Rock, for he must go that way."

"He's sure to," said Si.

"You, in case he should go by the Cave Trail, strike for there as soon as he leaves the ranch, but he must see you here when he leaves."

"Yes, cap'n."

"If he passes Red Rock in safety, then you look out for him at the cave."

"I'll be there, cap'n," said Si.

"Me, too, cap'n," Doc answered.

"He must never pass those two points."

"No, indeed."

"But what shall we tell ther madam, cap'n?"

"That the cattle have strayed, and you are going after them."

"All right, cap'n, we'll git that."

And back into the cabin went Tiger, while the two cowboys each took a dog with him, and on foot made a scout around the ranch, to meet at the ridge near where it joined the range, and to come in together before dawn and arouse the ranchero, so that he could depart, unless the presence of comrades of Buffalo Bill being about was discovered.

"I will leave the place just before dawn, Valerie," said Tiger.

"But why?"

"Well, I wish to be away when Buffalo Bill gets up and starts."

"You can keep in your room there, and he would not know it."

"True, if he made no search; but I believe firmly that he has comrades near, for brave as he is, he would not dare come here alone."

"Well, where will you go?"

"To one of my retreats, and one of the boys can come and tell me if he starts away all right."

"Well, you know best, Tom; but I cannot understand why you should fear that one man as you do, when you have been wont too often to terrorize a whole crowd and never count odds."

"Have you forgotten that I told you he charged me with being Tom Tresco, and he saw this brand upon my wrist."

"If I am taken, I hang, for there will no mercy be shown the man whom they arrest as Tom Tresco."

The woman was silent a moment, and then said, in a low tone:

"I can understand your dread now, Tom."

"You must indeed keep clear of Buffalo Bill."

William Cody slept well in spite of his surroundings, and when he awoke found the sun was up.

He made his toilet, and, stepping out upon the piazza that surrounded the cabin on all sides, found Mrs. Tracey seated in an easy-chair and reading.

"You must be lonely, as Mr. Tracey is so much away from home," said Bill.

"Oh, no, you are in error, for he is seldom away from home, and left only ten days ago for a run to the

settlements, where I never care to have him go, for he has many enemies and is sure to make more; but these people do not know him as he is in his home life, and judge him by what he is when under the influence of liquor, for, I am sorry to say, he will go upon his periodical sprees."

Buffalo Bill was silent. Could he have misunderstood the man?

Was he really the one he had charged him with being?

Or was he unknown in his real life to his beautiful wife?

His home was a pleasant one, when he had been led to believe it to be a mere hovel.

He found there a beautiful woman of refined taste and hospitality, where he had not deemed such a thing possible.

Two obtrusive, though villainous-looking, cowboys alone seemed to have charge of the cattle, and an old negress presided over the kitchen.

There were half-a-dozen savage-looking dogs lying about, but they showed no fierceness toward him, as their mistress accepted him as a guest.

The scout confessed to himself that he was puzzled.

Seeing the two cowboys coming from the corral, Mrs. Tracey said:

"Your horse has been well cared for, Mr. Cody, and now we will go in to breakfast.

"But, if you are in no hurry to be on your way, pray remain as long as it suits your pleasure."

This did not look like an anxiety to get rid of him, but he was not one who took all by appearances.

After breakfast, Si brought his horse to the door, as he said he must go, and the border king would have departed with many thanks and a formal farewell, but Mrs. Tracey stepped forward and offered her hand, while she said:

"I am glad to have known you, Mr. Cody, and you must always stop when you come near us, for I wish you to meet my husband and be friends with him."

Cody felt his face flush and muttered something—he did not remember afterward what—and then had to take Si's extended hand.

"Luck ter yer, pard," said Si, pleasantly.

"Says I ther same, pard," Doc Barney added, as he came forward.

And, springing lightly into the saddle, he was about to ride away, when the woman called out:

"May I ask if you know a man in government service, Mr. Cody, who is known as the border king?"

"I am called the border king, Mrs. Tracey."

"Then you are Buffalo Bill?"

"Yes, madam."

"How glad I am to know you, sir."

"We will see you again, Mr. Cody?"

"Yes, madam, thank you," and, raising his sombrero, he rode away.

"Well! so that is the home of the Man-Tiger, is it?"

"And that is his wife?"

"If I had not seen what I did, and know just what that Tiger is, I would never have believed it."

"Now, he is deceiving that pretty wife of his, I am sure."

"But what a surprise it will be to him when he comes home and finds I have paid him a visit."

"I wonder if she would wish to see me again if she knew now I had roped her husband in?"

"By the Lone Star of Texas! but I have half a mind to lie in wait for Tiger and never let him reach his home."

"No, he may not return for weeks, and I must get the scouts ready for the trail to break up the band of outlaws of the branded hand, for if Tiger is not their chief, I am away off the trail."

"Now for the fort," and he rode on at a swifter pace, his horse having had a good rest.

The innate caution of the scout chief had saved his life on many an occasion, when, but for it, he would have ridden into a trap.

It was not fear, it was self-protection, and where he would have sought big odds if it came to the scratch, he did not take chances where he would have to contend against an assassin.

So, as he rode along, Buffalo Bill grew suspicious.

He had not seen the ranchero at his home, there was no indication that he had been there, and every reason to believe that he had not.

Yet, after his escape from him, why had he not returned at once?

If he was on the watch, he had seen him go there, and would see him depart, and what more natural than that Tiger would lie in wait for him, for, knowing the country as he did, he could readily head him off somewhere on his trail.

The border king knew that part of the country.

Two years before he had been ambushed at Red Rock, fifteen miles from the Mission Ranch, by some Comanches.

Three of his cowboys had been killed, and himself and several others wounded.

He would pass the Red Rock Spring, he knew, by following the trail to the fort, so he grew more and more cautious.

"Now I think of it, that was a night attack, and I wonder if they were really Comanches or white men?" mused Bill.

"I am inclined to think that they were outlaws disguised as Indians."

"Well, I'll take a look at Red Rock before I ride by it, for it is a place where many a poor fellow has lost his life."

So, as he drew near the locality, the border king turned off the trail, and soon found a hiding-place for his horse.

Then he went on foot, rifle in hand, by a flank movement to approach the spring.

Reaching a point of observation, he peeped over into the valley, where the spring was located.

Putting his glasses to his eyes, he uttered a whistle the moment he looked through them.

"Well, holy smoke!" he said, in a way of exclamation.

"There he is, as large as life, and twice as natural, just waiting for me to come along so that he can add to my weight several ounces of lead."

"Now he knew I was at his house and must take the trail.

"I wonder if his wife and the cowboys, yes and the Black Venus and the dogs were in the secret!"

"Well, now to get the drop on the Tiger, for it has come to it."

Across the open stretch he went, his rifle in hand, and gained the shelter of the rock.

Up this he crept, and then rested to collect his strength and nerve, for his trip had been a hard one, part of the time upon his knees.

Feeling sure of himself, he peered over the rock.

There was the Man-Tiger not twenty-five feet from him.

The Tiger was nerved to the work before him.

He would kill the cowboy chief, and that would end the feud between them.

Keeping his eyes on the hill over which the trail wound, he said, as the time passed:

"Curse him! why don't he come?"

"I am here, Tiger," was the unexpected answer in the rear.

A yell broke from the lips of Tiger as he dropped his hand upon his rifle to turn upon his foe, but, quick as a shot, the lariat of the scout was thrown, encircled his body, and he was dragged to the ground just as his captor, with a mighty leap, reached his side.

"I've got you again, Tiger!"

"The border king!" gasped the prisoner, his arms held tight to his side by the lasso coil, and lying upon his side, as he had been dragged with the terrific jerk.

As the scout spoke, he was winding his lariat closer until he could disarm his prisoner.

This done, he slipped upon his wrists the handcuffs which he took from his pocket, and which Tiger had before made the acquaintance of.

Then he allowed his prisoner to rise, and said:

"Now, come with me, and show me where your horse is."

"I am on foot."

"Well, you shall walk while I ride; and I will keep a lively pace."

"My horse is yonder in the mesquite thicket," was the reply, as Tiger did not like walking.

"All right," and Buffalo Bill went in the direction spoken of, and there was the horse, hitched to a tree and muzzled.

"Now mount!"

The prisoner obeyed.

The feet of Tiger were not bound; but, once in his saddle, the scout made his handcuffed wrists fast to the large saddle horn.

Then he took the stake rope and led the horse to where he had left his own animal.

"Where are you going?"

"To get my horse."

"Ah!" and the prisoner seemed relieved.

"You must be very cautious to watch all the places you pass where a man could be ambushed," sneered the prisoner.

"I am, and it is well that I flanked the Red Rock, or I would be dead now."

"I was not waiting for you."

"Who, then?"

"Comanches."

"Ah, yes—some of the kind who rescued you from me."

"They did not rescue me, for I ran to them, and, pretending to join them, they did not keep a guard over me after a day or so, and I escaped."

"Tiger, does death turn an Indian white?"

"What do you mean?"

"Does a Comanche become a paleface after he has passed in his checks?"

"The other night you spoke in border dialect, appearing like an uneducated man, and now you have forgotten to talk as you did then, so I am more than ever convinced that you are Tom Tresco."

"I am not Tresco, though he was my friend."

"I have a happy home, and, though I am desperate under the influence of liquor, I am not a bad man at heart."

"I will say more, that there is a very strong resemblance between the man Tresco and myself, and

if I am taken to the fort, I will be strung up as the man you accuse me of being."

"You will, indeed."

"Now, you are not a rich man, Cody."

"No, I am inconveniently poor, Tiger."

"Well, I'll give you in gold five thousand dollars, if you will drop this idea that I am Tresco, and let me go free."

"You could not bribe me to do that which I deemed wrong for any sum you might name," was the stern rejoinder.

"Then my life be upon your head, if I am hanged."

"So be it, for my life came devilish near being on your head just now."

"No, I've got you again, Tiger, and shall hold on to you."

"You will find the Cave Trail best," said the Tiger, with a sigh, as he saw that Buffalo Bill could not be bribed.

"For you, yes," was the smiling rejoinder, and the scout took the trail to the fort, and, without further adventure, reached there and turned his prisoner over to Colonel Miles.

Then the colonel and the scout had a long talk, after which Buffalo Bill gave orders that his men in Buckskin should follow him at once on the trail to Soldiers' Ranch, whither he went without rest as soon as he transferred his bridle and saddle to a fresh horse.

It was after dawn when he again rode up to the ex-surgeon's home, and Captain Hass met him as he dismounted, and said:

"Your man is all right, Bill, for I performed an operation that restored him to reason."

"He knows what he owes to you, and is aware that Old Lulu has recognized him, for she was a servant in his family."

"The fact is his mother was an American—a relative of mine—and his father a Mexican officer."

"The boy was kidnaped when very young, brought up to a lawless life by his outlaw captors, and then became what he is."

"He wishes to be believed to be dead, but he will guide you to the retreat of the Man-Tiger, he says, and your escaped prisoner is Tom Tresco and the outlaw chief."

"Good! and I have him safe at the fort, doctor, and you shall hear all, for in a few hours my scouts are to be here, and we move against the Man-Tigers' retreat to-night," replied Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

For an hour did Buffalo Bill talk with Harold Benidel, the youth whom he had saved from the grave, and, though anxious not to worry him in his

weakened condition, he got all the information necessary from the boy to make his raid upon the Man-Tigers' retreat.

Buffalo Bill further learned that Valerie, the wife of the chief of the Man-Tigers, had met the man in Galveston, become infatuated with him, and followed him to his border home; but he, the boy, knew that her eyes were at last open to just what he was, and she intended, with him, Harold Benidel, to escape from the life they led and go to Mexico, for the woman had a fortune in jewels.

It was just nightfall when Buffalo Bill and his scouts rode away from Soldiers' Ranch, Captain Hass and twenty of his cowboys accompanying them, and, going by the trails the boy had directed, the retreat of the Man-Tigers was reached, and the attack made at dawn.

The result was the complete destruction of the band of Man-Tigers, and among those slain were found the two cowboys of the chief's cabin, who had been on the search for their outlaw leader.

With their booty and the few prisoners taken, the cowboys returned to the fort, while Buffalo Bill and the captain went by the Man-Tiger cabin.

It was open and deserted, save for the dogs; but a note addressed to her husband read:

You will find me gone, for now I know you in all your wickedness.

You told me the boy, Harold Benidel, whom I intended to take with me and return to his people, had been killed by Buffalo Bill, so I go with Black Venus alone, and you need never expect to see me again. In fact, I believe the great scout, Cody, will yet capture you and hang you. Good-by. Your unhappy wife,

VALERIE.

"So that ends," said Buffalo Bill, and he went on to Soldiers' Ranch, where the wounded youth was told all, the scout then saying:

"Now, my boy pard, I will say good-by, for you will, of course, return to your home in Mexico."

"I will, sir, and I owe all to you."

The next day Buffalo Bill rode into the fort, greeted with cheers, and, two hours after, the Man-Tiger chief and his men paid the penalty of their crimes, Monte Jose, the gambler, going from Trails Cross to see the execution.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 52) will contain: "Buffalo Bill's Boy Pard; or, Training the Buckskin Boy." The great scout's adventures with a boy companion, whom he trained in the knowledge of border life and fighting, and who was an apt pupil.

COMPLETE 7 FISHING TACKLE ASSORTMENTS 7

GIVEN AWAY
..AS PRIZES..

Look on the Back Cover to See What They
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IF YOU WIN ONE of these famous fishing tackle assortments you will have everything you could possibly need in the way of fishing tackle. You will have such a complete assortment that you will be able to MAKE MONEY retailing hooks, lines and sinkers to your comrades who have not been fortunate enough to win prizes. You may become a dealer in fishing tackle if you win one of these prizes, for you will have a complete assortment of over

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Besides SINKERS and TROLLING HOOKS.**

Fishing time is just coming in, so don't miss a chance for one of these magnificent prizes.

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This new Prize Anecdote Contest is on the lines of the one which has just closed—one of the most successful contests ever inaugurated. Every boy in the country has had some

THRILLING ADVENTURES.

You have had one yourself—perhaps you were held up by robbers, or were nearly run over by a train; perhaps it was a close shave in a burning building, in scaling a precipice, in bear-hunting, or swimming; whatever it was,

WRITE IT UP.

Do it in less than 500 words, and mail it to us with the accompanying coupon.

All entries must be in before September 1. The contest closes on that date.

The Prizes will be Awarded to the Seven
Boys Sending in the Best Stories.

Look on the back cover for photograph and description of one of the prizes.

To Become a Contestant for These Prizes cut out the Anecdote Contest Coupon printed herewith, fill it out properly, and send it to BUFFALO BILL WEEKLY, care of Street & Smith, 238 William Street, New York City, together with your anecdote. No anecdote will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it.

COUPON

Buffalo Bill Weekly Anecdote Contest, No. 4.

Name

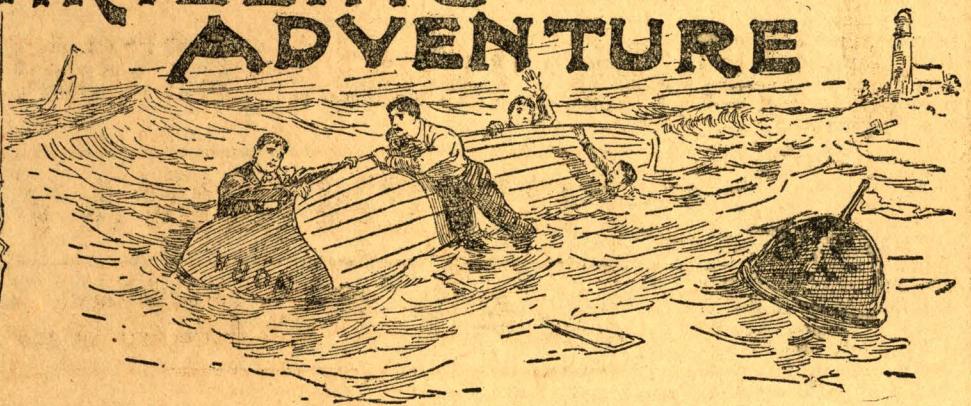
Street and Number

City or Town

State

Title of Anecdote

THRILLING ADVENTURE



Just take a look on the opposite page, boys, and then look at the back cover.

What do you think of that offer, boys? Isn't it great! What a splendid chance you have. Don't let it slip past you, but buckle down to work right away.

One of the biggest offers ever made in this Weekly, and you can't afford to miss it. Get into the contest right away.

The names of the prize winners in the contest that has just closed will be announced in two weeks. Watch out for the announcement.

Maybe you'll find your name in it.

A Bear Story.

(By Maylon E. Bush, Mich.)

When I lived in the woods in the Red Lake region in the northern part of Minnesota, I made the acquaintance of a boy by the name of Eddie Button. My mother had gone visiting to Minneapolis, and my father and I were alone.

I went up to Eddie's one day, and his father had just killed a large bear. This made Ed and I crazy to go hunting, so we arranged to tell our fathers that we were going hunting squirrels, as Mrs. Button had gone with my mother.

My father had a fine rifle, and so did Mr. Button. The next day I started for Ed's house. He got his gun, and we started for Diamond Point, a kind of cape in the lake that was full of thick underbrush. We got there about two o'clock and roasted some squirrels that we had shot. Then we began to beat the brush. We had not gone more than a quarter of a mile when we heard a crash, and we both jumped upon the trunk of a fallen tree. In about a second a deer came running past, and we both fired. The deer fell, but got up again and ran away.

Our rifles were repeaters. We were tired, so we sat on the tree about ten minutes when we heard a kind of a snarl or growl, and a large black bear came lumbering along. We both were scared, so Ed said:

"You stay here while I go around behind the bear."

"Go along, then," I said, and he started.

He got down and tried to sneak around, but the bear saw him and started after him, and I fired at the bear and hit him in the hip. This turned him on me, and I shot at him again, but at random. I dropped my rifle and unsheathed my hunting knife.

I stubbed my toe and fell, and the bear was on me in no time.

I was scared and began to shout. Ed came up and buried his hunting knife in the bear's back. The bear left me and went after him. My left hand was now useless, for the bear had broken my wrist—but up I got and fired at him and hit him in the hip or hip bone and broke his hind leg, but on he went on three.

Ed began to call for help, and I picked up my knife and away I went. The bear could not go fast, so I soon caught up with him, and buried my knife in his back near Ed's. Down he went and I on top of him, but he got hold of my foot, as I

was getting up, and as it was moccasined he bit my foot pretty hard.

I grabbed a piece of knotty wood and began to hit his nose with it. He soon let go and when I got up I could not see Ed anywhere. I went back, got our rifles, came back to the bear and finished him. I was too lame to walk back home so I skinned the bear, made a fire, roasted some bear meat and stayed all night. Next day father and Mr. Button came out after me.

Ed was always afraid to look in my face again. He said he knew he was a coward.

An Exciting Time.

(By Ray G. Towse, Pa.)

I will relate a little adventure that I had last summer.

A party consisting of four boys, including myself, decided to camp on Chartiers Creek.

The first three day passed along without much sport, but on the fourth day we were about to eat our meal when two tramps came into our camp. We only had air rifles with us. "We have come a long ways to dine with you," said one of the tramps, but we were too frightened to make any reply.

Meanwhile one of our boys had slipped away for help, and as the tramps were about to take possession of our camp he arrived with a farmer and two of his hired men, who drove the tramps away.

It was very exciting while it lasted. Afterward when we went camping we had our fathers with us.

An Adventure with a Panther.

(By Russel Clifford, Le Gear, Mich.)

One bright moonlight night I was called to arise quickly and go for a doctor a distance of some twenty miles, as my mother was taken suddenly ill.

I hurriedly went to the stable and saddled one of the finest horses in the barn, a fine black mustang. My way led through a dense forest which was often frequented by wild animals, but

my horse being fleet of foot, I felt comparatively safe. As we neared the middle of the forest my horse appeared restless. Suddenly the noble animal stopped, backed, reared on his haunches, then dashed madly forward.

And when I could rein him sufficiently to find the cause of alarm I could hear at the distance of some hundred paces the angry cries of a panther. It is enough to say I did not return home that night.

Shipwrecked.

(By Wm. Steele, Mich.)

When I was nineteen years old I shipped on a sailing vessel from Mobile to Bristol, England.

On the night of the 23d of January, 1900, we were off the coast of England, and about 250 miles off shore. A northeast gale struck us, and carried every piece of sail and the masts off the ship and came very near swamping us.

The next morning we tried to get the only remaining boat over the side to get into it when a big wave hit the vessel and knocked the boat and me overboard. I thought my last minute had come, but as luck would have it, one of the crew threw a rope over and I caught it, and was drawn on board again.

We drifted for three days and four nights, expecting any minute to go to the bottom, but a German steamer called the Barcelona picked us up and brought us to New York.

"I Wouldn't Like to be a Soldier."

(By Archie Brazington, Minn.)

Last Christmas I and two other friends went out hunting. One of the boys had a .22-caliber rifle and the other had a .32-caliber. The latter had a defect about it so that when you would go to cock it sometimes it would stay and sometimes it wouldn't.

One of the other boys had just exchanged with its owner for a few moments and had shot at a squirrel.

He had taken the empty shell out and was putting in a new cartridge. The other boy was sitting about six or eight feet away from him. Well, he got it in all right, but just then the hammer slipped and the gun went off. It struck the boy about half way between the ankle and the knee.

The other boys carried him a ways, then got a neighbor to take him home. The doctors took out several pieces of bone. Then first thing he said when he awoke was:

"I wouldn't want to be a soldier."

The bullet was a .32-caliber shot. The boy isn't able to walk without crutches now.

An Adventure in a Duck Boat.

(By John Burns, New York.)

On April 15, 1901, a number of friends and myself decided to go over to our village park across the river in a boat and play baseball. There were about eight other boys besides the ones that were left on shore, and as we were as anxious to go over there as the rest we decided to go, too.

There was only one boat to go in and as that would only hold eight the rest of us hunted around until we found a duck boat, which is about two inches above water line. The rest of them got to the other side all safe and sound, but, alas! We that went in the duck boat were doomed to a good wetting.

As the boat leaked the water came in through the leaks rapidly. When about in the middle of the creek our weight and that of the water sank the boat. We all went down, but only two of us could swim. As my clothing was the heaviest of any, I, of course, went to the bottom like a stone.

One of the boys dove down and got hold of my collar and kept hold of it until a boat came from the shore and rescued us. As I got the nearest drowned of any of them I of course was talked to the most. After we had got on land the baseball game was postponed and we went home, a badly frightened crowd.

Holding Up the Tramp.

(By Laurence Willey, N. H.)

I will tell my readers of my adventure with a tramp.

One day I was going to a small town a few miles from the city. There was a man a few steps in front of me going in the same direction.

He stopped and waited till I caught up with him. I was taken by surprise for in a minute he grabbed me.

Just then I heard a whistle from an approaching train. I had been walking down the track. He made for the woods just as the train went by. Then he turned my pockets inside out.

He got a revolver that I had and seventy-five cents, and then let me go. I followed him, then grabbed his coat tails and pulled him down to the ground, and got what belonged to me.

I covered him and told him to go.

I have never seen him and never want to any more.

An Exciting Experience.

(By Curtis Seward, Pa.)

I am now twelve years of age, and when I was about seven years of age there was a man in our town that had a ring in his nose and everybody was afraid of him. Women and children scarcely ever ventured out after dark.

One day while I was playing with my playmates I happened to look around and seeing this man with the ring in his nose coming down toward us, I ran to my mother and cried for her to open the gate, but she did not hear my cry. So I ran and hid behind a tree. After a while I came out from behind the tree and he was still on the street. I was sure to watch him until he was out of my reach.

The man disappeared in a very short time, and then I ran home. My mother told me if that man ever got hold of me he would eat me alive. I never had such an experience since and when I think of it it makes me shiver.

My First Deer.

(By Alva Towers, Me.)

On the 5th day of January a chum of mine, Andy Arnold, and myself were hunting on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, about twenty miles due north of a small town named Gladstone.

We had been there then about ten days, and Andy, who was a man about forty-five years old, and had fought Indians and all kinds of beasts on the plains, and in the mountains of the great Northwest, had killed two deer, a bear and about two dozen turkeys while I had only about seven turkeys to my credit.

I had had three pretty shots, but I always was afflicted with a violent attack of buck ague at the moment, and I had missed with a great deal of regularity. Of course I felt a little blue to think my partner could get close enough to a deer to kill them with a Spencer repeater, while I could not kill them with the improved Savage rifle that I was carrying. But to go back to my story. On the morning of the 5th I was strolling around our camp, and about 150 yards from the shack I struck a fresh deer track.

"Now," I thought to myself, "I will track him down and kill him without letting Andy know anything about it," for I knew if he was along who would kill the deer, and I wanted to kill it myself, so I went back to the shack where Andy was sewing up a rent in his hunting shirt, got my rifle and told him I was going out to see if I could get a turkey.

I also took the pains to put some canned biscuit and a chunk of venison in my pocket when he wasn't looking and was ready to start.

He told me not to get lost and I said I wouldn't, and away I went. I followed that track until about 3 p. m., and then as I happened to look ahead I saw my deer rise up from a little bunch of brush and shake himself and begin to look around. He was only about one hundred yards away, and I threw my rifle to my shoulder, took quick aim and fired.

When the gun cracked he bounded away into the brush and I thought I had missed him. I took his track again, and about twenty yards from where I fired at him I found him stone dead with a bullet through his heart. I quickly dressed him and swung him up on a limb out of reach of bear or wolves.

And then it came over me all of a sudden that I was lost. I started to go as straight as possible, but found myself walking in a circle.

At length at nightfall I sank down, tired out. I was awakened late that night by Andy, who had followed my trail.

A Close Call.

(By Grover C. Parker, Texas.)

One beautiful morning of about two years ago a lot of us boys concluded we would stay out of school and go hunting and fishing. Well, about 9:30 a. m. we met at a railroad bridge about a mile from town and started for a pond seven or eight miles away. We were about two hours making the distance.

When we reached the pond we found plenty of duck and a great many fish. First we shot a few ducks and then took one of the ducks to bait our hooks to fish with. We caught a few fish and sat down to eat our dinner. When we had about finished eating we heard a freight train whistle.

One of the boys said, "Let's ride that train home," and all said, "All right," for we were tired out walking.

The train stopped to get water at the pond and we climbed up on the cars for a ride. It had gone about a mile when we concluded it was going too fast, and wouldn't stop at town. So we all jumped off. Some of the boys hurt their feet when they jumped off. But I came within an inch of getting run over.

That broke me from riding trains.

A Noble Creature.

(By E. J. Nieman, Ill.)

Early in June my cousin and I went on a hunting trip. I was visiting my uncle in Iowa at the time.

We had made a canoe to fish in, so we determined to camp near a river. It was near the Iowa River. We took a large dog with us. He was a Newfoundland. Late the third evening when we had gone to sleep we heard the dog barking furiously. We jumped up and ran outside the tent. When the dog saw us he barked louder than ever. At last he started on a run for a clump of bushes that grew near.

Presently two green eyes flashed in the darkness and a large gray wolf landed from the bushes and made for the dog. A fierce contest ensued. We were afraid to fire at the wolf for fear of hitting the dog. At last the dog got a grip at the wolf's neck, and he soon dispatched it. But he had a deep wound at his neck which bled freely.

His eyes grew weaker. At last he turned over his head and died. We felt very badly for the loss of the faithful creature. In the morning we buried him where he met his death fighting so bravely.

An Adventure with a Wildcat.

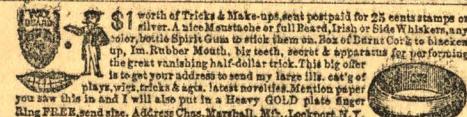
(By William Gander, N. Y.)

It was about nine o'clock in the evening on a warm summer's night. My friend, John Harris, and I were going through a valley over in the back of the Fishkill Mountains. This valley is called Hell Hollow, because of its wild animals.

Suddenly we were startled by a noise. We turned our heads. We saw that a wildcat was almost upon us, and we started to run.

The wildcat saw this. He gave one spring and landed upon my back. He tore my coat clean from my back. He would have killed me had it not been for my friend John. Luckily, he had a revolver with him. He shot at the wildcat. He shot the second time, and killed it that time, but the bullet struck my arm and I carry the scar to this day.

We have the beast's hide for a mat in our parlor.



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BOYHOODS OF FAMOUS MEN.

This department contains each week the story of the early career of some celebrated American. Watch for these stories and read them, boys. They are of the most fascinating interest.

Those already published are: No. 1—Buffalo Bill; No. 2—Kit Carson; No. 3—Texas Jack; No. 4—Col. Daniel Boone; Nos. 5 and 6—David Crockett; No. 7—General Sam Houston; Nos. 8 and 9—Lewis Wetzel; Nos. 10 and 11—Capt. John Smith; No. 12—Wild Bill; No. 13—Dr. Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout; No. 14—Buckskin Sam; No. 15—Seneca Adams (“Old Grizzly” Adams); No. 16—Pony Bob (Bob Haslam); No. 17—Major John M. Burke (Arizona Jack); No. 18—Kit Carson, Jr.; No. 19—Charles Emmett (Dashing Charlie); No. 20—Alf Slade; No. 21—Arizona Charlie (Charlie Meadows); No. 22—Yellow Hair, the White Boy Chief (William Burgess); No. 23—Broncho Billy (William Powell); No. 24—Squaw-Man Jack (John Nelson); No. 25—Major Lamar Fontaine (the Sharpshooter King); No. 26—Buck Taylor (King of the Cowboys); No. 27—Bruin Adams (J. F. C. Adams); No. 28—California Joe.

No. 29—Pawnee Bill (Gordon Lilly).

The hero of this sketch of the men of Borderland left his home from the fact that the longing to see wild life among the Indians caused his father to allow him to go out to the Indian Territory to visit an uncle who had a ranch there.

But Gordon Lilly, in his early boyhood and years of home life, had shown a wonderful skill for getting into mischief, while he was daring to recklessness and always willing to take the part of the under dog in a fight.

He was brought up to ride well, shoot, swim and take care of himself in trouble, and of others who needed his aid.

He attended a country school and was a good scholar, a handsome fellow and of a well-proportioned form, though not tall.

But between the teachers of the school and Gordon there was war continually.

The cause of Gordon's dislike for the teacher, which seemed fully reciprocated, was on account of the boy having one day offered himself for the thrashing which the master was going to give a sickly little fellow for some trivial offense.

The teacher showed his evil disposition by whipping Gordon soundly, deliberately intending to whip the little fellow, too, although he had pretended to accept a substitute.

This Gordon stoutly resisted, and the result was a rough-and-tumble fight, in which the boy got the worst of it, though the teacher did not come off unscarred.

From that day there was bad blood between the teacher and Gordon.

Among the girl pupils attending the school was a maiden of sixteen, the daughter of a poor but well-educated farmer, and his only child.

Her name was Della Hunt, and she was gentle, lovable and the belle of the county since she was fourteen years of age.

Upon her the tutor, Ross, seemed to have centered his love, for he was partial to her at all times in her studies, aided her more than any other of the scholars, and was only too glad when recess came, when he could give her a lesson in drawing, a tuition that was wholly gratuitous, as it was not included in the school exercises.

That Della was deeply impressed with the handsome young teacher there could be no doubt.

Ross, however, had one strange habit, and that was to mount his horse on Friday afternoons, when school was over, and go, no one knew where, until Monday morning.

He was wont to say that he visited an old friend in the mountains, but Gordon's keen eyes showed him that the teacher often looked very blue after his trips, and all day Monday would nod in his chair and generally neglect recitations.

One Friday Gordon did not appear at school and as usual Ross departed after hours for his weekly trip.

But he had not gone very far before he met a young girl on horseback, who said she was a stranger in the country, and was going to seek relatives living in the mountains.

She frankly confessed to the teacher that she had no near kindred, her parents had died in the city, and with what money she had, which was considerable, she was going to buy a little home in some village and become a school teacher.

Ross promised her his aid, and the two rode on together toward the mountains.

The following Monday the teacher was at his desk, looking pale and haggard, but Gordon was still absent.

As school was closing, Ross told the scholars they were all invited with their parents, to Farmer Hunt's home on the coming Wednesday, to the marriage of himself and Della, the maiden ending her school life that day to become his wife.

Della blushed and hung her head, and then burst into tears, and kissed all the girls, and shook hands with all the boys in farewell, and then Ross led her to her horse, placed her in the saddle, and was mounting his own animal when he saw a party of some thirty horsemen coming toward the schoolhouse.

At a glance he recognized them as the parents of his pupils, and turning very pale as he descried Gordon at their head he called out:

“Come, Della, for your life, come with me!”

Involuntarily, she obeyed, and they darted away in rapid flight, to the surprise of all the school children, while with loud cries the horsemen started in pursuit.

Both the teacher and Della were well mounted, and they sped away like the wind along the mountain road, while the farmers came on in hot chase.

But Gordon was also splendidly mounted, on a wiry roan, which had won many a long race, and he began to gain on the fugitives very slowly, and at the same time rapidly increase the distance between himself and his companions.

Every now and then he would observe Della glance back, and recognizing her father among the pursuers, attempt to draw rein; but Ross would at such times mercilessly lay his whip upon her horse—and the enraged and frightened animal would again fly onward.

Gordon in the meantime had drawn near enough to see that the teacher held the rein of Della's horse, and that he seemed to use force to make her accompany him, and he urged his roan mare to greater speed, for he knew if Ross reached the mountain path a hundred yards ahead of him, he could hurl stones down upon him that would not only keep him but the entire number in chase at bay, as one man could hold that steep pathway against fifty.

That Ross always went armed with a revolver Gordon also knew, but he had his own trusty Colt's, a prize he had won at a shooting match and did not fear the teacher and so pressed on.

Nearer and nearer the fugitives drew to the mountain pass.

So on he urged Racer, as he had named his horse, and saw that he was gaining rapidly.

Three times he raised his revolver, but, uncertain of his aim, lowered it, until, seeing that he must fire or the teacher escape, he pulled trigger.

The black horse ridden by Ross gave a mighty bound and swerved so badly that his rider was compelled to release Della's rein, and at this instant Gordon again fired, and the black went down, hurling the teacher over his head.

Ere Ross could rise to his feet, Gordon dashed up and got a

bullet in his left arm. But he instantly returned the fire, and Ross sank forward upon his face.

"Oh, Gordon! you have killed him!"

"How has he ever harmed you?"

"Ross! Ross! speak to me!" said Della, who had reined up her horse as quickly as she could, rode back, and springing to the ground, threw herself by the side of her lover.

Gordon's heart seemed too full for utterance as he saw the maiden's deep grief, and he stood in silence and with bowed head nearby.

But just then up darted the first of the farmer pursuers, and it happened to be Della's father.

"Oh, father! he has killed him!" said the maiden, raising her tear-filled eyes.

"What, dead?" gasped the farmer.

"Yes, I killed him; and Della is angry with me, so please tell her what he has done," said Gordon, in a trembling voice.

"Gordon, this is no time for accusations over his dead body," said the farmer, and the others coming up an examination proved that the bullet had glanced on the skull, stunning not killing Ross, who soon rallied, and was taken to a farmhouse which was his home. Under the physician's care he was not long in recovering.

Della learned from her father that Ross was a wild young lawyer from a distant city, who had a client who had left his fortune to his niece.

That client was the brother of Farmer Hunt, and they had not been on good terms for years, but the approach of death made the rich bachelor leave his all to Della, and he told Ross where his brother lived, and that the heiress was to come into possession of her inheritance when she reached her eighteenth birthday.

To get control of this fortune, the wild, dissipated lawyer had sought the vicinity of Della's home, become a teacher, and was to have made her wife had not Gordon, with a skill that made his name famous in after years as a trailer, disguised himself as a girl and met the teacher on his weekly pilgrimage.

Once in the mountains, he had robbed the supposed maiden of all her money, for Gordon had his all with him, and then taking her horse, had left her, as he believed alone.

But Gordon was swift of foot, followed after him, and reaching a village ten miles away, found that the teacher had sold the horse and then gone on to the city.

Thither Gordon followed him upon a horse he had gotten from a farmer, a friend of his father, and having discarded his male attire searched about the streets for his foe.

At last he saw him with a party of others, and by inquiry found out that he was called a gambler in the town, and was then going to the saloon to play cards.

"I'm only a boy, and they won't let me in, but I'll yet expose Mr. Edgar Ross," he said, aloud, and his words were heard by a lady who was passing, and who wore a heavy veil.

"I heard you speak a name I know well, young man; are you acquainted with Edgar Ross?" she said.

Gordon was surprised that he had spoken aloud, but told the lady all he knew about Ross, and frankly said he hated him for whipping him, as he had, and intended to be revenged upon him.

Then Gordon heard her story, and it was that she was the wife of Ross, whom he had poisoned and believed dead, but who had tracked him to prevent his marrying the maiden who had inherited the fortune, and which she suspected was his intention.

Gordon then proposed that she should go with him to his father's, and when they arrived there on Monday Farmer Hunt was sent for, and the whole story of Ross' villainy came out. The neighbors held an indignation meeting, and mounting their horses started for the schoolhouse to arrest the teacher, and the result is already known.

Ross was taken back to his old home, tried and convicted for the attempt to kill his wife, and sent to prison, while Della soon got over her first love, and married a worthy young farmer.

As for Gordon, he became a hero, and, thirsting for adventure, mounted Racer one day, and armed with rifle and revolver, and accompanied by his faithful dog, set out for the Wild West.

On his long ride out to the Indian Territory, Gordon Lilly, boy of fifteen though he was, had to face deadly dangers that would have tried the nerve of any man.

One night he was attacked in his lonely camp by two tramps, whom he had given a supper to and allowed to sleep by his fire.

But they had forgotten the dog, Buffalo Bill, who sprang upon one as he crept, knife in hand, upon the sleeping boy.

As the other tramp fired upon the dog, whom Gordon Lilly had named after the great scout about whom he had read so much, Gordon also fired and the man fell dead.

The tramp held by Buffalo Bill in a death grip was so badly injured that Gordon mounted his horse and rode to the nearest village and reported what he had done.

A trial followed, with a delay of days, but property and weapons found on the two men—for the second one had died—showed that they were desperate characters, and the boy was allowed to go on his way.

At a farmhouse where he put up for the night, the farmer, learning that the boy had some sixty dollars, tried to kill and rob him that night, but got a bad wound for his trouble, as Gordon suspected him.

In a swollen stream one day he would have been drowned but for his dog, who came to his rescue and aided him ashore, when he was tired out from trying to release his horse from some tangled brushwood in which he had been caught.

His horse was drowned, but the brave boy swam out and released from it the saddle, bridle and outfit, and got them ashore.

His things were all wet, blankets and provisions, and his matches as well, so it was a hard night for Gordon and his dog; grieving for his much-loved horse, the boy had to wait until dawn.

Carrying all his traps, he tramped on until noon before he came to a hamlet, and it took nearly all his money to buy a horse and provisions.

But he bravely went on his way until the Indian Territory was reached, and worn out and sick, he rode into a Pawnee Indian village.

The Indians saw that he had a high fever and was delirious, and cared for him as best they could.

In his delirium he would call for his dog—"Bill! Bill! Bill!"—and so the Pawnees named him Bill.

It was long weeks before he recovered, but at last he did so, and a Pawnee warrior was his guide to the ranch of his uncle, where he was most cordially received.

The guide was well paid for his services, and the youth found that, in his long illness, not a thing had been taken from him by the Pawnees.

One day a distinguished visitor came to Gordon's uncle—the man of all men he wished most to see.

It was the great scout, Buffalo Bill, and he was told to look at his namesake, the dog.

The scout also heard the youth's story of his long trail, and said:

"Every man changes his name out here, and I shall call you Pawnee Bill."

The youth was proud of his name, given him by the scout, who told him to look him up at the fort if he ever wished to go scouting.

Soon after his uncle, having sold out his interests in the Territory, left for the East; but Pawnee Bill refused to go and went to live among his old friends, the Pawnees.

For two years he lived among them, and was then appointed Government interpreter, after which he became a scout, and won fame as one of great skill and daring, serving in several Indian wars.

Then he became again a Government interpreter, and later an agent, as he was known to possess wonderful influence among the tribes.

When the "Boomers" began to enter the Indian Territory Bill won a great reputation, and knowing the country perfectly, he was the first to get across the line in the "race for homes," and thus gained a homestead there.

Going to the East, he took with him his wife, a beautiful girl whose love he had won, and who was known as the Belle of Borderland, and who could ride, shoot and throw a lasso as well as any man in the Territory.

To-day Pawnee Bill and his handsome wife have a fine home in the Indian Territory, and the latch-string of their door is ever hanging on the outside for those who care to visit them.

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72 One Cent Lines	.72	3 Dozen Snelled Hooks, 2 cents each	.72
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